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# Self-consciousness in Aesthetic Experience: Why Heidegger's Book on Hegel Can Matter for Literary Criticism

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CHARLES ALTIERI

I have been working on the concept of experience as a focus for literary studies. My positive motive involves an effort to stress how contemplating what unfolds as imagination gives a work presence and confers the power to appreciate fully what authors accomplish. But this positive motive proves inseparable from a negative one— to create suspicious or even hostile attitudes to those who insist that the primary value of imaginative experience is the conveying of some kind of cognition. This insistence on cognitive values can be philosophical, concerning what we can learn about life from our reading. Or it can be socially and historically oriented, focused on the difficulties and complexities of existing under specific economic and cultural traditions.

These cognitive concerns obviously matter to readers. But are they the richest ways to engage imaginative works of art? Can those concerns best focus on what I consider the two inseparable aspects of significant art—its ability to provide contemplative and affective intensities capable of engaging the reader in situations they deem worthy of attention, and its eliciting involvement and admiration for what the writer can achieve by the deployment of technical skills necessary for the establishing of distinctive presence? In one sense readers have to be suspicious of my critique of cognitive ambitions because it is not obvious that my proposed alternative can match the practical value of the forms of knowledge the work can be said to communicate. But I will argue that when we seek knowledge from art we fail to give sufficient attention to the specific qualities of the experience that make it art in the first place. In so doing, we also fail to participate in the intensities and the ambiguities of the work in favor of identifying with discursive frameworks for the aesthetic experience that often offer only warmed-over borrowings from the interests of philosophers and social scientists.<sup>1</sup>

My argument will stress how Heidegger on Hegel develops a concept of “philosophical experience” that helps clarify and extend the two distinctions that have been the basic of my work on art as experience.<sup>2</sup> One is the distinction between experience as verb and as noun. As verb “experience” is pure and constantly shifting. Figures from Montaigne to George Bataille to Rei Terada are right to assert that such experience continually manifests its orientation toward conflict with what consciousness tries to impose upon it. But the noun “experience” suggests that self-consciousness can successfully gather aspects of pure experience track and organize these aspects so that they take on coherence and consequence. I want to claim that literary experience involves the production of nominal states capable of multiple levels of coherence.

The second key concept is the difference between “Experience of” and “experience as.” When we think we have an experience of something, we are likely to treat it as a possible instance of some more general category. An experience of a bright light makes us want to locate its source and perhaps explain its origin. But if we treat that bright light as an “experience as” in relation to some condition, we pause to dwell on how it illuminates a scene or enters into contrasts with other features of the scene that distribute light differently. In this second case we are not interested in explanation but in

the kinds of attention that produce involvement in the particular in ways that foster self-conscious appreciation of how that involvement emerges.

Here Heidegger's book matters because he develops out of Hegel the possibility of a third kind of experience with the capacity to integrate experience of and experience as without losing the distinctive particularities of aesthetic experience. "Philosophical experience" is defined in opposition to "natural consciousness" that is content with practical concerns for categorizing discrete states of being. In contrast, philosophical experience stresses the self-reflexive awareness of the powers to constitute presence for concerns about truth:

Our thought grasps experience in its full nature—as the beingness of beings in the sense of the absolute subject—only when it comes to light in what way the presentation of phenomenal knowledge is a part of appearance as such (HCE 121).

Appearance as such is the state of presence in which self-consciousness recognizes its own contribution to what appears. By developing this "as such" Heidegger can sharpen his contrast between explanation bound to phenomenal knowledge and the activity of contemplation that enables and dwells in states of full presence. And this link between contemplation and full presence provides a suggestive way of imagining what we might call the experiential after-life of works of art. Contemplation both engages presence and affords a locus for remembering that presence and adapting it to future experiences. On this basis we can develop a coherent model for how thinkers like Hegel and Robert Pippin can claim philosophical significance for particular versions of experience as, without invoking traditional epistemic protocols. They pursue what philosophical experience can do in reconciling the asness of particular aesthetic experiences with the mind's desire to treat these experiences "as" sources of contemplation.

I must issue one proviso before I get into the core of my arguments. As much as I have learned from Heidegger and want to be faithful to his text, I need to separate my use of his arguments as much as possible from his obsession with ontology. Ultimately I am interested in beings rendered by artists rather than studying Being as it emerges in *Parousia* (e.g. in HCE48–49). This dimension of Heidegger's concerns taken literally seems more a contribution to religious studies than to how contemporary philosophy proceeds. I want to adapt these concerns to talk about aesthetic experience. And I do not want Heidegger's ontology because while he recognizes how knowledge of the Absolute depends on a dialectical logic, his sense of presentness makes him uncomfortable with any continuous historical process. For Heidegger there is one crucial historical moment from which we still suffer the consequences—the break from the pursuit of "truth" as "*Aletheia*", which Heidegger treats as Being coming out of concealment, to the concerns for truth which Aristotle envisioned as the result of inquiry into the nature of particular beings.

Ironically my distance from Heidegger as a philosopher strikes me as a source of permission for using his version of Hegel to theorize about the arts.<sup>3</sup> For such theorizing the primary need is probably for distinctive models of experience stressing how states of presence can extend into philosophical modes of awareness. Heidegger's treatment of Hegel on philosophical experience foregrounds how in particular situations one can focus on the conditions that frame our making judgments that enable experience to take on shape and significance. And Heidegger's working out of philosophical experience by stressing acts of contemplation, and the qualities of self-consciousness that accompany those acts, helps us articulate the values involved in these states of awareness. And in so doing we find ways of talking about the "content" of art without having to make cases that honor the epistemic conditions regulating claims for cognition. Because he is dealing with Hegel, his accounts of these experiences also allow us to address the historical and dramatic contexts that elicit appreciation for the achievement of individual works of art. Then Hegel's concern for becoming self-conscious about the frameworks making distinctive experience possible provides an ideal theater for the work on contemplation—both in relation to what becomes present and to what might become present with this awareness in the background.

## I

Heidegger bases his book on a fact I did not know. The original title of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* was "Science of the Experience of Consciousness" (HCE 7). In order to elaborate the force of this Hegelian concern for experience Heidegger provides a section by section reading of the "Introduction" to the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. These readings establish several contrasts I want to deploy—especially contrasts between natural consciousness and philosophical experience, representation and presentation, and explanation and contemplation.

We have to begin our account by attending more precisely to what is involved in the states of philosophical experience that Heidegger sees at the core of Hegel's *Phenomenology*. Heidegger typically defines his preferred conceptual schema in terms of contrasts with how philosophy after Aristotle constructs its priorities. In this case, the opposition is between natural consciousness, content with representing the world by statements that seek truth, and philosophical experience that seeks to identify in and identify with the nature of subjectivity required to establish a relation between truth and "Reality." Natural consciousness "will show itself to be only the Concept of knowledge, or unreal knowledge" (HCE 13). In fact, all knowledge qua knowledge is unreal knowledge because it is content with beings or represented situations rather than with the reality that has to be pursued as a state of presence rather than pictures of facts.

In order to achieve this grasp of presence, philosophical experience has to separate itself from natural consciousness in two fundamental ways. Our experience of the world in thought must be grounded in contemplation adequate to full presence rather than explanation, which has to be content to resolve doubts that arise in particular efforts to describe relations among beings. Philosophical experience has always to produce awareness of the Being of such beings—primarily by identifying self-consciously with the resources that make representations possible. True science is not the study of facts but the awareness of what in the mind produces the possibility of fact. So Hegel can assert that "Science is the subject of the system, not its object" (HCE 142). Then Spirit becomes able to examine what truth is. Truth is not exhausted by the adequacy of representation because this adequacy only addresses the natural world. A fact is only an index of "truth," for a full experience of "truth" depends on the mind's recognition of what it brings to the situation and how its vitality establishes a presence for the scene in the mind:

Once the presentation of the appearance of self-certainty is achieved, the Being of what self-certainty regards as existing and true has arisen from it as the new subject matter—the truth of certainty; and certainty is self-consciousness in its self-knowledge (HCE 154).

## II

Now I will isolate three motifs in Heidegger's argument that seem to me crucial for dealing thoroughly with works of art as particular experiences: 1) his claim that the primary goal of philosophical attention is to elaborate states of presence, 2) his stress on contemplation as the vehicle for apprehending how presence gets constituted, and 3) his treatment of what self-consciousness gains access to by virtue of its awareness of how it provides frameworks for achieving these moments of presence.

First, Heidegger's effort to introduce "presence" into Hegelian thinking by the opposition between natural consciousness and philosophical experience provides an especially useful way of casting the limitations of traditional modes of empiricist inquiry, especially when we are dealing with art works. Clarifying those limitations in turn provides a framework in which the discourse of presence clarifies why aesthetic experience matters for the psyche. Natural consciousness deals with appearances and desires to isolate particular aspects of those experiences so that interpretations can be offered and checked. Because they must deal with beings rather than being (or even complete situations), such explanations are always partial and always divisive. In order to foreground the

relevant elements being interpreted and explained, the explanation must leave out all of the details that seem not pertinent: “this” because “not that” becomes the governing concern. There simply are no wholes for traditional philosophical inquiry because to treat wholeness would require entirely separate vocabularies relegated now to religious studies. In contrast, philosophical experience can present the object to the subject in a way that the subject can feel itself as subject: “The nature of the subject is constituted in the mode of self-knowledge” within the act of representing (HCE 34).

Heidegger begins his talk about presence with Hegel’s recognizing that Descartes altered Modern philosophy by making it about not the world but about self-consciousness of one’s place in the world: “Philosophy contemplates what is present in its presence” (HCE 27). Then Heidegger insists that contemplation (not reason) is the vehicle by which we “regard what is present, in its presence ... and strives to regard it only as such” (HCE 27). This introduces strategies very different from Cartesian ones. Cartesian rationalism is like empiricism in the sense that it pursues what turns out to be an empty “here,” this time located in the thinking subject. But when Hegel talks about presence, the subject has its place in the emergence of an experience because subjectivity provides backgrounds by which presentness takes on substance: “To be conscious means to be present in the ingathering of what is represented” (HCE 56–57). Then self-consciousness can align with the composing purposiveness within the work as the basic means for participating imaginatively in what establishes the experience as presence. Such purposiveness without purpose can be compared with the work other artists do, but there is no need to talk about totality.<sup>4</sup>

### III

Interpretation and explanation cannot be represented as doing the work of ingathering. But contemplation enables this kind of activity, and so allows self-consciousness to see itself as necessary for transforming fact into presence. My second motif then requires unpacking how Heidegger deploys the idea of contemplation and why it can be relevant to poetics, despite its history of usage in religious contexts. We have to begin by recognizing that contemplation for Heidegger involves two aspects of the spirit’s activity. One is the work of ingathering. The second is an embodied attentive will mobilized by that ingathering to dwell in the sense of presence that is emerging: “The subjectness of the subject is in such a way that, knowing itself, it fits itself into the completeness of its structure. This self-fitting is the mode of Being in which the subject is” (HCE 148; see also HCE 33). Individual beings find their places in the unconcealedness occurring as an overall condition of awareness.

My contrast between acts of ingathering and acts of explanation is not quite Hegelian because for him the opposition between the two states constitutes a complex dialectical interrelationship. But I will remain with Heidegger here initially because this simple adjustment in vocabulary provided by the idea of contemplation seems to me a crucial addition to how literary criticism might imagine its basic task. The concept of contemplation matters because it refers to the patience to take in the full parameters of an experience. It is that taking in which fosters an intimate connection between self-awareness as a condition of involvement and the qualities of objectness which this mode of dwelling transforms into presentness. And making that intimate connection allows us treat contemplation as sanctioning a view of consciousness that can account for the “as” basic to Heideggerian self-awareness:

True, consciousness has a general notion of its object as object, and likewise of its knowledge as knowledge. But natural consciousness does not pay attention to this “as,” because it accepts as valid only that which is immediately represented, even though it is represented always only with the help of the “as.” ... In the nature of consciousness this quality is split apart and yet can never part. (HCE 104).

“What is to be measured and the measuring standard are present together” (HCE102). Heidegger shows that only contemplation can establish a position capable of observing how “It is the nature of consciousness that makes measuring possible and yields the measure” (HCE 95).



For Hegel dialectical thinking provides that togetherness. But for Heidegger there has to be a different model of framing which establishes how being and thinking come together. Contemplation fills that bill because it offers both awareness of the complexity of a full experience and adapts self-consciousness to who one becomes as one undergoes philosophical experience. And because contemplation can be ongoing, it cannot be reduced to a mere state of awareness. It typically involves a will to continue, and probably to pursue even more satisfaction for the mind that sees itself in the presence.

In essence contemplation does the work of knowing, but it does not produce propositions. Instead it takes in the experience of presence in a way that focuses on its place in meditating on relationships to other experiences. It becomes responsible for producing an "experience of" that honors the particularity of how an "experience as" takes hold of our attention. And it has the power to extend the presence of the work into reflection on how the work relates to other works and to the culture that generated it. "Contemplation" provides a model for how philosophical experience leads us to see the subject in the object rather than the object as bound to the lens of an observing consciousness standing apart from what it observes. In effect contemplation can explain how Heidegger thinks Hegel can treat consciousness of experience as elaborating both subjective and objective uses of the genitive: consciousness establishes a world and confirms the possibility it being treated objectively. And only "contemplation" could call attention to a very different psychological temporality where hovering self-consciously over particular situations replaces the urgent dismembering of the scene required to pursue knowledge with the elements divided into bits of data: "The subjectness of the subject is in such a way that, knowing itself, it fits itself into the completeness of its structure. This self-fitting is the mode of being in which subjectness is (HCE 142).<sup>5</sup>

Heidegger also stresses how where subject is, there also emerges an activity of willing. The sense of presence can only exist when the subject also affirms its self-awareness of who one becomes by virtue of this contemplative process. Presence becomes complete with the willing that affirms self-consciousness as a satisfaction of spirit (See HCE 148). Phenomenology becomes possible when the mind can be seen as an activity of ingathering that takes in a whole state of Being and treats that being as an object requiring completion in the subject's mind and will.

#### IV

I think we are ready for an example of contemplation dramatically illustrating the mind at work in contributing to how a specific poem comes to take on presence. In this case I have chosen W.C. Williams "Spring and All" because it so radically emphasizes the purposive activity of the author while articulating what the object becomes within this mode of subjective involvement. Contemplation is required for both reader and poet in order to enable taking the time to let the mind dwell on details and especially on authorial choices that ingather what the poem produces as complex presence correlating subject and object:

By the road to the contagious hospital  
under the surge of the blue  
mottled clouds driven from the  
northeast—a cold wind. Beyond, the  
waste of broad, muddy fields  
brown with dried weeds, standing and fallen

patches of standing water  
the scattering of tall trees

All along the road the reddish  
purplish, forked, upstanding, twiggy  
stuff of bushes and small trees



with dead, brown leaves under them  
leafless vines—

Lifeless in appearance, sluggish  
dazed spring approaches—

They enter the new world naked,  
cold, uncertain of all  
save that they enter. All about them  
the cold, familiar wind—

Now the grass, tomorrow  
the stiff curl of wildcarrot leaf  
One by one objects are defined—  
It quickens: clarity, outline of leaf

But now the stark dignity of  
entrance—Still, the profound change  
has come upon them: rooted, they  
grip down and begin to awaken<sup>o</sup>

We can begin by asking what “All” can mean in the title. In one sense the word could be simply an addendum inquiring into what might justify this gesture. Or it could be part of an expression dismissing what need not be an object worth observing. In another sense, “all” indicates that just mentioning “spring” would be for a modernist poet a weak pastoral gesture, without a sufficient attention to the self-consciousness that begins with the question how the poet will make good on this supplemental phrase. Perhaps this “all” bids for a level of involvement in the reading which will focus on the totality of spring in relation to how the poem stages its details.

The first set of details seem devoted to giving a sense of presence to how “dazed spring” may approach within a setting still marked as a winter landscape. No verbs are allowed for fourteen lines. Williams presents flat particulars, linked only by adjacency. The poem’s first verb in line fifteen is merely the abstract “approaches” that primarily just organizes further adjacency. But the stanza following this verb does change the mode of attention to a delicate humanizing concern for a sense of inner life within the scene: consider the feelings evoked by the first “Now” in the poem—functioning as more verb than adverb. Here there is a change in the level of activity because the poem forces the eye’s spatial wandering into the mind’s sense of possibility for change. And this sense of possible change generates in turn a series of other verbs that “ingather” the diverse space into an overall “it.” Now the poem’s own contribution to this sense of quickening is most powerfully present.

In the final eight lines there emerges a sense of the whole in which the adjacent elements all participate. Verbs now dominate in unifying the scene, in part because Williams is careful in this section of the poem to make everything asserted about spring literally happen within what proves a complex set of choices. The most dominant feature of this turn is the power of a second “now” to function as both verb eliciting action and adverb calling attention to the speaking’s investment in changing qualities. Then the sense of synthesis is carried by the austere collective state of “stark dignity of entrance.” That state develops “It” as the relevant agency here, since there is certainly no human source responsible for the action. Instead, this mode of agency can correlate “now” and “still”—no mean feat, especially since “still” serves as both adjective giving action to the substance and adverb measuring the increasing focus engaged by the observing consciousness. More important, “now” and “still” function as further totalizing atmospheric conditions shared by all the particulars and intensified by the ability of the final two verbs to mobilize that general state by adapting unobtrusive partial personifications. Here personification seems to go outward rather than inward by suggesting actions persons share with natural processes.

Williams is also very careful in his decisions that structure the sequence of verbs when their time finally comes. “Rooted” begins the series with a past participle, a reminder of what allows for life and

what prepares for the ensuing verbs in the present tense. And then the present tense verbs are intricately related: gripping down becomes a precondition for growing up. Two other aspects of tense emerge with the phrase "begin to awaken" because it combines a sense of continuing action with a sense of the timelessness or at least the undefined temporality of the infinitive stressed by Heidegger in his *Introduction to Metaphysics*. The state of matter here becomes inseparable from the verbs that transfer energy and bring the activity of nature into ineluctable proximity with the desires of the situated impersonal mind. And the verbs intensify matter's possible interactions with a mind intent on realizing its powers to produce a presence for the process of awakening.

## V

I saved until last the core concern of Heidegger's book—the shape of the self-consciousness that philosophical experience produces. In my view this concept is crucial because it shows a way to connect the investments of self-consciousness in aesthetic experience with the capacities that persons develop to deploy concrete memories of these experiences in existential situations remote from aesthetic spheres. We can understand how specific attention to works of art can play dialectically into the analysis of cultural situations. But for Heidegger (and for art in general) philosophical experience also has immediate applications to actual situations that bypass dialectics. Such remembered experience can be devoted entirely to reading one concrete situation in light of the example provided by another experience of presence. So we need for both kinds of cases a persuasive connection between the self-consciousness afforded by specific philosophical experience and the modes of awareness various kinds of example can provide, many of which can function dialectically as contrasts to other ways of engaging experience.

Heidegger begins developing this version of self-consciousness by asserting that even sceptics can recognize states of presence. What they refuse to recognize is the capacities of self-conscious reflection to establish the shapes by which the mind characteristically constitutes such presence. The presentation can escape the fate of being relegated to a mere instance only if our experiencing "is certain of containing within itself the whole history of the formation of consciousness, a process in which natural consciousness can find the truth of all its shapes" (HCE 71). "In presentation both what is to be measured and the measuring standard are present together" (HCE 102): "The presentation of experience is part of the experience and belongs to it because it is the movement by which consciousness recognizes its own reality" (117). So when consciousness and its object are united it is not the result of "applying one to the other." Rather "the nature of consciousness consists in the cohesion of the two" (HCE 102). "Dialectical movement which consciousness exercises on itself" reflects on "its knowledge as well as its object" (HCE 113): the concept comes to be in consciousness and consciousness finds itself in the concept" (HCE 115).<sup>7</sup>

For me the crucial question becomes how can we characterize this dynamic model of self-consciousness in a way that best accommodates works of art as well as philosophical claims. Clearly logical forms play a crucial part in how self-consciousness accounts for giving experiences distinctive shapes. There also can be a strong case for our awareness of historical contexts and tensions that frame dialectical judgment. But to stop here is probably to make overt philosophical contexts the sole measure of the frameworks available for recognizing how the sense of presence comes about for our experiences. I want to push the capacities of self-reflection within philosophical experience even further. It seems to me necessary not to ignore Wittgenstein's work on cultural grammar as another framework by which we find the subject in the act of objectification and the objectification as testimony to an act of mind.

Heidegger's gloss of one sentence from Hegel's *Phenomenology* seems fully to support my extending how self-consciousness can see itself constituting presence:

In the sentence "But consciousness is for itself its own Concept," the real stress lies on the "is." It means it is consciousness itself that accomplishes its appearance to itself and, at the same time, constitutes the

stage for the appearance, since the stage is part of its nature. Thus consciousness finds itself in its Concept. (HCE 81)

Works of art can obviously be placed within logical and dialectical frameworks visible to self-consciousness. But for the arts the “truth” of the “measure” matters less than awareness of the variety of forms that constitute a particular as particular. So we need the framework provided by cultural grammar for the appreciating the mind’s contribution to the presentness of that particular. The notion of frameworks for experience must be as fluid as it is powerful. And once we secure how cultural grammar stages the presence of the particular, we can shift to placing the result of grammatical investigation in a dialectical context stressing its internal tensions.

## VI

All of these frameworks ultimately matter for me because the sense of presence they compose provides ways of stressing how the particularity of the experience can resist the empiricism’s commitments to generalization and the explanations generalization affords. With works of art, self-consciousness expands by contemplating relationships among particular encounters rather than seeking the categories afforded by explanations. So bringing Heidegger on self-consciousness to works of art requires asking two more questions about these experiences of presentness. How can a work’s resistance to the categories of knowledge provide an alternative interpretive vehicle by which to make comparisons and sharpen judgment? And how can the arts be seen as crucial for theoretically expanding our contemplation of “experience as” so that it has consequences in the actual world? Logical and dialectical forms are fundamentally abstract in the sense that they provide shapes for numerous assertions and judgements. But with works of art, the particular given to contemplation must be the vehicle for generalization. If art is to matter in the actual world, it is Hamlet’s speeches and choices, not his instantiating Renaissance melancholy, that have to be shown to be relevant in processing our own experiences of presence.

This general claim can be clarified by turning to the ways that Nelson Goodman, Richard Wollheim, and Robert Pippin have developed the concept of exemplification so as to elaborate a mode of thinking sufficiently powerful to establish an alternative to standard models of explanation for how imaginative work can engage experience beyond the text.<sup>8</sup> But now I will just develop my own version of the work example can perform because that work is closely tied to contemplative processes involving the intricacies of “of” and “as.” The stakes are large because the case of exemplification affords the ultimate pay-off for Heidegger’s treatment of philosophical experience.

One can draw tight parallels between my generalizations about kinds of experience and the mind’s powers to develop two kinds of example. “Example of” seeks to characterize a particular by including it in some general class. Othello’s actions when he becomes jealous are in many ways typical of extreme jealousy. And my occasional anger at my wife usually stems from standard expectations born of male privilege. But when we treat a remembered experience in terms of its being “an example as,” the process involved is quite different. Here we do not generalize by treating the action as an instance of some more general class. One can of course do that, but one is then willing to surrender the individuality of the experience—a large price to pay in relation to art.<sup>9</sup> Instead we can treat the particular as providing a singular instance that may be generalized only while preserving the work’s particularity. I can let myself feel the shame of my own inability to escape my interpellation into my culture. And Othello’s specific instance of jealousy can become much more interesting to think about, or even to use as an example, than treating it as just another instance of being trapped in delusion. Concentrating on the play as an instance of jealousy must ignore both Iago’s brilliance in bringing it about and Othello’s effort to dignify that jealousy by treating his murdering Desdemona as a priestly sacrifice. Acting out of simple jealousy proves an insufficient expression of his situation and what he does with that situation.

Heidegger's work on the concept of contemplation affords the possibility of third way of treating example. "Experience as" in its presentness can become the object of "experience of" while retaining its particularity. The particular work becomes an aspect of possible self-conscious frameworks for our engaging other events. We move from adapting individual features of works to the world so we can elaborate the possibility of deploying our remembered involvement in the way a complete work ingathers its various relationships developed among the particular moments of presence. One might use the concrete example of Othello's overall situation in order to dramatize a crucial tension in the Renaissance between desires for self-ennoblement and skeptical worries that one's efforts at nobility just conceal fears of these efforts being sheer self-protective delusion.

But when we use the work for general cultural purposes we have to be careful to emphasize the way the experience develops. It is not enough to interpret a particular motif or idea for which the text comes to stand—so long as one wants to bring the entire work into the world. Let me take a somewhat extended example of the problem of seeking after knowledge that results in only partially ingathering the experience and limiting its possible value for self-reflection. Robert Pippin's recent Hegelian book *Philosophy by Other Means* does a superb job of showing why we might want to claim knowledge for how certain writers work out complex ideas of self-hood. But occasionally his concern for the experience of certain praiseworthy states of mind somewhat trivializes the author's ambitions in rendering concrete situations.

One telling example occurs when he develops a convincing case for the philosophical value of how Henry James treats Maisie's coming to self-knowledge in his novel *What Maisie Knew*. Pippin is clearly right that Maisie, though still a child, develops a fully adult capacity to judge her situation, work out her best interests, and know how she is changing by virtue of that work. She meets the two basic criteria for self-knowledge in her choice to reject her feckless parents and stay with her dull and drab governess because the governess is responsible and reliable. One criterion is simply the analytic adequacy of her analysis of the problems facing her. The other is the capacity not only to act on the knowledge but when challenged to stand behind what she has determined.

This is certainly right. But I think it is not what James is fundamentally interested in. That interest is in the pathos of her noble clarity which condemns her to a life far inferior to what her intelligence deserves. Here, as often in James, the best conceptual solution defining a character's future life is also in many ways the bleakest available action. Having to settle for the small-minded and prudish world of her caretaker aligns Maisie with Claire de Bellegarde in *The Americans*, Elizabeth Archer in *Portrait of a Lady*, and Morton Densher in *The Wings of the Dove*. It is true that Maisie's processes of reasoning are far more complex than Mme de Bellgarde. But they are less complex than Isabel Archer's and Merton Densher's. In all four cases we have to pay attention to the complex of actions and emotions that make the reader feel involved in the consequences of such decisions. Only then, I think, can the reader claim the kind of knowledge that engages the full particularity of the experience. And only then can one approximate Hegelian analysis of how imaginative works take their place in the dialectical path creating the possibilities and limitations of modern social life. Rightness can be a moral victory, but produce existential tragedy. So the reader's admiration has to become aligned with deep pity and a sense of nobility trapped by almost enviable judgments that are doomed to unhappy consequences. It is not so much what Maisie learns as what her learning costs her that gives her exemplary status for the dilemmas facing bright children in James's England—just as it is not what Antigone does so much as her having to choose between obligations to family and Creon's ideal of justice that earns her a place in Hegel's story.

## VII

My second version of the work done by example involves returning to our reading of Williams's "Spring and All." What model for discussing "knowledge of" can preserve the stylistic ambitions Williams exhibits? And how might we reflect on the cultural tensions that underly how the

poem articulates its situation? We can respond easily to the first question. This poem provides a writerly experience of recognizing the change from winter to spring, with all the romance implications of that figure subdued to a process of awakening. In such an experience we cannot separate the linguistic strategies from the perceptual events the poem promotes. Contemplation has to understand how each stylistic move and the substance it engages depend on each other. Spring depends on what poetry can do to make it present. And poetry depends on its ability to recognize in new ways how spring makes an event of its emerging. Our first role for example then emerges in the process of honoring the capacity of Williams stylistic accomplishments to influence subsequent lyric approaches to spring.

Responding to my second question requires shifting to a cultural theater in order to justify a quasi-Hegelian reflection. This is Ralph Waldo Emerson characterizing the nature of experience:

Dream delivers us to dream, and there is no end to illusion. Life is a Train of moods like a string of beads, and, as we pass through them, they prove to be many-colored lenses which paint the world their own hue, and each shows only what lies in its focus. ... We animate what we can, and we see only what we animate. Nature and books belong to the eyes that see them. It depends on the mood of the man ... Temperament is the iron wire on which the beads are strung.<sup>10</sup>

Probably the most important cultural feature of Williams's poem is that the first person is nowhere in sight. Several modernist artists and writers realized that the skepticism basic to Emerson's essay derived mainly from his insistence on the priority of temperament. Temperament becomes the only source of judgment. Such belief makes collective consciousness and collective agreement impossible, with the only contrast to this skepticism the possibilities of faith in some sort of religious context for one's observations.

In Williams's poem subjectivity does not create a world so much as participate in its objective realization.<sup>11</sup> Eliot's *Waste Land* is probably a more profound presentation of a poetic alternative to Emerson's values. It links shared seeing to dealing with the unconscious and the plethora of voices that in large part constitute modern reality. But Williams is unique in his so emphatically basing lyrical value on how linguistic effects clearly deriving from shared powers can constitute an experience that simply is embedded in the unfolding of a natural scene. I do not think any dialectical discussion of modern culture can be complete if does not recognize the significant potential of this way of handling experience. Dialectics must ask how such concrete examples become effective indicators of sources of blindness in the dominant attitudes prevailing in cultural life, while also filling out the virtues of the emerging attitude so that their limitations will also emerge. This cannot be done by explanation because the power of art is mostly in the concrete presentations offered for contemplation.

*University of California, Berkeley, USA*

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> There is even a more important stake in treating art as a distinctive mode of experience that here I can only gesture toward. The ultimate value of stressing the artistic construction of experience is that this is the best way to cultivate in society capacities for appreciation and for reflecting on why acts of appreciation can matter for its interests. I was once convinced that "appreciation" was just an exercise in social privilege. But I ignored how appreciation almost has to include orientations toward sympathy and empathy—both with



imaginative situations and with the artist composing that situation. And it can include dimensions of gratitude and acts of will to elaborate where that sympathy and empathy might lead. I am still painfully aware that these psychological dispositions can also be ascribed to social privilege. But the more we see of appreciation as social connection the more we are likely to consider such privilege as something we want to make available to everyone.

My case gets stronger when we realize that it is difficult both to appreciate and resent at the same time. And we certainly do not need more resentment in our interactions with society. Instead we need seeing what in others seem worth acknowledging as valuable. And that occurs in art when our imaginations become involved in situations, characters, and authorial choices that seem to reward our attention. One can also say that appreciation in the arts goes beyond individual acts of attunement to the work because it establishes conditions for social bonding. As members of audiences we are likely to want to share our experience and through discussion refine and deepen it. Max Scheler put this social dimension best when he compared what he called material goods to spiritual ones. At some point the pursuit of material goods will encounter conditions where seeking more goods for the self leads to less goods for others. (And then resentment deepens.) But with the arts, the larger the audience the greater the possibility that the pleasures of some ultimately establish greater involvement for all. Consider the difference between a huge cake and a symphony. (And please ignore the response of a student to my use of this example in the 1970's: "When I am stoned, man, the cake is a symphony."<sup>2</sup>)

<sup>2</sup> See for much fuller explanations my book *Literature, Education, Society* (Routledge, 2023).

<sup>3</sup> For Heidegger's love of poetry but resistance to aesthetics see David Nowell Smith, *Sounding Silence: Martin Heidegger at the Limits of Poetics* (Fordham University Press, 2013). This book offers a superb treatment of the ways in which Heidegger's ontology drives him toward poetics even as his dislike of formalism makes him suspicious of work in this field. But Smith does not even put Heidegger's book on Hegel in his bibliography, probably because Heidegger's straightforward contributions to poetics lie elsewhere. See also Gerald Bruns, *Heidegger's Estrangements: Language, Truth, and Poetry in the Later Writings* (Yale University Press, 1989, and Krzysztof Ziarek, *The Historicity of Experience: Modernity, the Avant-Garde, and the Event* (Northwestern University Press, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> In my *Literature, Education, Society*, I speak of Kant's purposiveness without purpose as simply the work of doubling by which art realizes particular worlds. But conversations with Dan Blanton have convinced me that for Kant this purposiveness is a property of concrete works of art. I want to stress its obvious psychological implications by attributing this purposiveness to how the author makes visible the processes of construction.

<sup>5</sup> The next sentence in Heidegger's text offers a superb instance of his connecting his ideal of "Parousia" with Hegel's Absolute: "System" is "the coming together of the Absolute that gathers itself into its absoluteness and, by virtue of this gathering, is made constant in its own presence" (HCE 142). However I must admit that Heidegger is sometime aware that contemplation will not produce glimpses of the Hegelian Absolute because thinking for Hegel is closer to the violence or *deinon* idealized in Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*.

<sup>6</sup> *Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams: vol. 1*, edited by A. Walton Litz and Christopher MacGowan (New Directions, 1986); p. 183.

<sup>7</sup> When Heidegger turns to Hegel's Absolute he offers the fullest parallel by which we can align philosophical experience to the arts. See HCE 138.

<sup>8</sup> I elaborate this history of developing the concept of example produced by the arts in my *Reckoning with the Imagination: Wittgenstein and the Aesthetics of Literary Experience* (Cornell University Press, 2015), pp.137-42.

<sup>9</sup> To adapt a statement from Wittgenstein, if one cannot find a specific work in a museum it is not likely one will say this work will do instead.

<sup>10</sup> Emerson, Ralph Waldo. *Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Major Prose*. (Harvard University Press, 2015). p. 229.

<sup>11</sup> Here it seems worth mention that Cézanne's concept of realization is probably the best modernist alternative to artistic ideals of representation, imitation, or expression, certainly when we are speaking of Williams:

I am able to describe to you again...the obstinacy with which I pursue the realization of that part of nature, which, coming into our line of vision, gives the picture. ... We must render the image of what we see, forgetting everything that existed before us. Which, I believe, must permit the artist to give his entire personality, whether great or small.

"Letter to Emile Bernard" (Oct 23, 1905) in John Rewald, ed., *Paul Cézanne Letters*, trans. Seymour Hacker (Hacker Art Books, 1985), pp. 251-52.

# The Predilection for White and Black in Le Clézio's Early Works

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KENICHIRO OTANI

Building upon the existential framework developed by J.M.G. Le Clézio, this essay attempts to shed light on the essence of the enigmatic colorless world-view to which the early works of the 2008 Nobel Laureate in Literature frequently refer. To be more precise, his fictional universe of the 1960s and 70s is characterized and defined by the patterns of white and black. During this period, the Franco-Mauritian author, in a connotative manner, uses this dichotomous motif and suggests that only this colorless contrast exists in the world. In other words, in his novelistic representation, rather than the symbolism of living color which is incidental, the pair of inanimate and inorganic opposites is always primary. This black-white dualism thus becomes an obsessive *leitmotif* for the young author. In regards to this stylistic technique, *Voyages de l'autre côté* (1975) turns out to be the “last novel” of the future Nobel Laureate, while Masao Suzuki calls it the “first Le Clézio” (11),<sup>1</sup> similar to the interpretation of Thierry Marin about the periodization of the author's works (2–4). This counter-hegemonic novel constitutes a philosophical reflection of the young writer against “a stranglehold over the dissemination of information to the masses” (Moser 2023a, 1), because his fascination for black and white present in his early works and which has persisted since Le Clézio's first novel *Le Procès-verbal* (1963), disappears. Nevertheless, this theme in the early literary works of the author remains scantily studied in the field of French and Francophone Studies. Specifically, no existing studies exclusively focus on this white-black duality related to the philosophy from which Le Clézio derives much inspiration.<sup>2</sup>

A few researchers are nevertheless interested in the colorless concept of the young Le Clézio. For instance, Ook Chung underscores these two elements of *Le Livre des fuites* (1969) in his analysis of prophetic discourse and investigates black and white as symbols of collective or personal consciousness (158–161). Moreover, Ruth Amar, who focuses on the thematic study of loneliness, indicates that “dull, gray colors” represent “colorless colors and that of parity (non-difference)” (71; 71). This semantic analysis demonstrates the state of the dystopian overflow at the heart of the contemporary city in *Les Géants*. But these studies are the only ones that delve into the essence of the colorless world-view in Le Clézio's early works. Although his texts as a young author bear witness to an obsession with this black-white dualism, this aspect of his early writing needs to be explored more systematically. The purpose of this essay is to fill this research gap and to shed light on certain details of Le Clézian writing allowing us to better grasp its essence.

In his novelistic imagination, the author often exposes the reader to all the paradoxes that emanate from a colorless representation. His text then produces a feeling of ambiguity that he conceals behind fallacious words. In order to question the antinomies of the young author, we will focus on the sybaritic experience of his daydreams, as Sophia Haddad-Khalil posits (6–12). Studying the internal experience he has of his novelistic world will therefore be an effective approach for understanding his true feelings compared to a much more literal analysis. Thus, whenever the black-white interplay is present, it becomes increasingly difficult to deny that the writer instinctively tends to



dwell within the confines of his self-centered world. This reflection will demonstrate that Le Clézio's predilection for white and black is a universal symbol epitomizing our common nature shared with all humanity. It would be utterly naïve to think that the author is by nature a special person rather than being an ordinary human being. With no exception to the fact that a real artist endeavours to possess a keen understanding of seemingly invisible forces defining the human condition in a given era, the disappearance of the black-white *leitmotif* with egocentric overtones coincides with an artistic maturity that allows Le Clézio to reach a wider readership. Despite the purity of the writer's intentions, it is therefore debatable whether the notions of the "desire to commune with the greater material, biosemio[ti]c matrix" (Moser 2023b, 7) found in *L'Extase matérielle* (1967) and *L'Inconnu sur la terre* (1978) are connected to each other. The evolutionary process leading from his early style of writing to the "second" (Suzuki 11), more mature, is not easy to define, because the borders between the two versions of him, as an author, are blurred. Thus, to clarify this ambiguity, we should discuss the similarities that bind them together rather than highlighting their differences. Outlining this development is therefore an essential step in developing critical studies on the Nobel Laureate.

Considering the first literary phase and contextualizing it with his tendency for white and black will deepen our understanding of why the author has, over time, modified his literary and philosophical approach, away from a "French Beat spirit" (Thibault 2009, 11). The use of the colorless dyad perfectly symbolizes an internal mechanism well known to the young author: paradoxical discourses. This essay will thus enhance our understanding of an inner evolution that will reconnect to the position of a "writer-traveler" (Thibault 2009, 10), or "passer" between different cultures (Roussel-Gillet and Salles 7-13). The study of his predilection for white and black will help to reveal the hidden charm, emotion, sincerity and joy of the young Le Clézio, still not very popular with readers compared to the second version of himself.

### Contextualization of the Young Le Clézio's Fictional Reality

From a philosophical perspective, it is by design that the archetype of the white-black dualism generates *Extase matérielle* (Material Ecstasy) which offers an invitation to a dreamlike journey that penetrates inside a myth of the author. For the young Le Clézio, who appears to be a philosopher rather than a novelist not only to critics but also to the writer himself, his imagination expresses and translates its own complete reality, similar to the postmodern spirit which derives much more inspiration from the fictional construction of reality than its representation. The aforementioned literary device immerses the reader in an unusual space of the fictional world. Through this reverie, as evidenced with many of Le Clézio's characters, we can read the author's state of mind at the time. With the publication of *Le Procès-verbal*, this motif appears in his interview with Jean Chalon in 1963, where the author at the age of 23, talks about publishing a book one day explaining the internal mechanisms of his extremely strange first protagonist. In this conversation, this writer identifies "Material Ecstasy" as the thought of Adam Pollo. This way of thinking allows this character to transform into a beach, dog or animal that can be found at the zoo (Chalon 3). While starting with a gaze, Pollo's mentality, interconnected with Le Clézio himself as the latter muses (Chapsal 1963, 31-32), reaches the ineffable cosmos. After the publication of the collection of short stories *La Fièvre* in 1965 and then the novel *Le Déluge* in 1966, Le Clézio moved to Bangkok as a French teacher in order to complete his national obligations as a technical assistant. The Franco-Mauritian author then published the essay *L'Extase matérielle* in 1967. I posit that these previously mentioned four works lead to a mythical reality born of his appetite for personal happiness illustrating how one never interrupts the endless flow of absolute ego.

Against the background of a quest whose goal is to visualize a detachment from oneself, the black and white dyad abounds, to the extreme, much more than in his other works written up until the end of the 1970s. In order to understand what characterizes the colorless vision of Le Clézio, it is necessary to analyze the novelistic images from the writings of this period. Let's take a representative

piece that we find at the beginning of *Le Procès-verbal*. The example in question shows us the spirituality of Pollo which consists of a type of mysticism in which every object becomes unique and eternal. These representative images underscore his solipsism based on the black-white dualism, our subject of study. Through the lens of Pollo's implied insanity against the backdrop of social norms as Keith Moser underscores (2014, 96–100),

The sun also deformed certain things: the road, under its rays, liquefied in whitish patches; sometimes cars drove by in single file, and suddenly, for no apparent reason, the black metal burst like a bomb, a spiral-shaped lightning flashed from the hood and caused the whole hill to flare and bend, with one blow of its halo displacing the atmosphere by a few millimeters. (Le Clézio, *Le Procès-verbal* 15)

Specifically, from 1963 to 1967, white and black are in contrast, contradict each other, oppose each other, as opposed to Junichiro Tanizaki's theory in *In Praise of Shadows* asserting “no matter where it becomes clean or where it becomes unclean, it is better to blur the lines” (10). At the same time, the two overlap to provide a complete picture of Le Clézio's fictional reality. The principle of “Material Ecstasy” is best expressed through the idea of an impossible unification of the colorless antinomies of white and black. Later we will analyze in more depth this aspiration of the writer to find his own exclusive truth. As for the period of Le Clézian solipsism, Masao Suzuki remarks that the novel *Terra amata* (1967), after the publication of the essay *L'Extase matérielle*, is positioned in the same periodization as the latter (16–62). Admittedly, there are several motifs common to these two books, such as the effort to negate the distinction between life and death. However, a comparative analysis of the imaginary universes of these two works reveals a great discrepancy between them.

### **The Act of Being a Creator**

In *Terra amata*, which may connect to the practice of “cosmic historiography” that is not limited to *Homo sapiens* (Moser 2018, 133), more precisely in its prologue and epilogue, the creativity of Le Clézio is a step towards knowledge of the “closed world” (240) meaning the limits of his imaginary space. This idea refers to a distrust of the author with regard to his novelistic creation itself. This distrust would later inspire the novel *Le Livre des fuites* (1969). In *L'Extase matérielle*, on the other hand, this dimension of mistrust is substantially absent, for instance, as opposed to *La Guerre* (1970) and *Les Géants* (1973) written against “the rise of multinational capitalism [coinciding] with the birth of hyperreality and the post-truth era” that Keith Moser highlights (2023b, 12). Consequently, everything the author conceives is truth in this regard. Le Clézio explains that he writes “by doing writing [...] with no other aim than to be oneself” (*L'Extase matérielle* 74).

Away from the European continent, the writer with dual Franco-Mauritian (Franco-English at that time) nationality, completed his French military service in Bangkok, as a French teacher at the University of Thammasat as a technical assistant.<sup>3</sup> With the publication of *L'Extase matérielle*, in his interview with Daniel Albo, Le Clézio denounces sexual tourism and confesses to considering this country and its inhabitants as inferior because of the low regard they place on the culture of writing, which conversely makes the literary text possible (Albo 26–27). At the same time, it should be noted that the author shows less interest in the cultural differences between Southeast Asia and Europe. Rather, he ponders common Thai culture, developing a strongly ethnocentric point of view.<sup>4</sup> This confession, not worthy of that of a future Nobel Laureate described as a “writer-traveler” or “passer” between different cultures, may refer to Pollo's position. The latter considers himself to be the center of the world by looking at others through the prism of his own rules. To be more precise, neither Le Clézio nor Pollo want to deepen their understanding of a society to which they cannot conform. In this regard, a Western egocentrism is apparent in the author at the time, especially in the works written around the same time as *L'Extase matérielle*.

Through his own creative instinct, the writer seeks to impose on others his particular psyche in which the primitive prototype of the world is molded by himself, to be more precise, as Plato muses

on demiurge being responsible for creating the world (445–446). The ethnocentrism of the author, like that of his characters, is obvious. However, Le Clézio and Pollo strive to abandon their original civilization. There is a paradox here as the author is a common person like us. This dilemma or inconsistency arouses in the protagonists a self-destructive impulse, as if the author himself is the victim of an unbearable and violent suffering. This contradiction is embodied in the character of Pollo, who civilized society rejects because of his existential discord. Nevertheless, at the same time, this protagonist rejoices in the madness that results in his internment in an insane asylum.

Pollo's behavior symbolizes a struggle against the shackles of Western civilization, a theme that fascinates Le Clézio. The author strives to penetrate inside the Self, while avoiding the real. This is about making the most of words in order to achieve spiritual unity. Through the alchemy of words, the writer manages to bring the reader into the super-reality of Pollo, a state of "Material Ecstasy." Le Clézio invites the reader to enter the delirium of an alienated, anxious individual facing loneliness, a hallucination where words lose their usual meaning and are no longer sufficient, but which at the same time renders paradoxes possible.

This illusory journey is reflected in the power of the fictional reality in which the writer anchors himself at the time in order to rediscover a realm detached from society. In what elements does Le Clézio anchor this desire to move away from reality? He complains first of all about the frustrating life of "civilized" human beings in Europe: "[...] I would have preferred never to have been born. Life, I find it very tiring" (*La Fièvre* 7). In his interview with Madeleine Chapsal, Le Clézio insists on the impotence of human emotions, as well as the uselessness of life. In this case, the author praises the fictional universe. His imagination allows him through writing to realize his own reality, where it is possible to unite two opposite sides of the same idea like, for instance, death and life (Chapsal 1965, 36–37). Belonging to a literary civilization makes this state of mind possible through the construction of a fictional reality. This means that this rhetorical technique helps Le Clézio to unite the antinomies. Parallel to this tendency of the author to refuse the real, his early character Pollo focuses on mental efforts with the intention of concretizing his identity. In reality, however, it does nothing. In other words, this protagonist, similar to the "lonely pervert" from Kenzaburo Oe's *Sexual Humans* (107), opts for a spiritual life in an imaginary reality where he can wield any object at will.

Thus, the fabulous imagination helps Le Clézio to establish his own spiritual fortress. From this follows the prerequisite of the conviction that writing constitutes the perceptual basis of the concrete things that surround us. Following this logic, his visual acuity at the time alludes to solipsism and selfish exclusivity. In this way, the writer strives to develop a spiritual vision of reality mixed with white and black. In order to reduce the feelings of insecurity that are triggered in society, Le Clézio strives to know how to identify the link that unites life and death. In his interview with Roger Borderie, the author reveals his vision of this link in *L'Extase matérielle* where "death is not another world, and [...] to die is simply to pass from a form of life to another" (Borderie 12; 12). He endeavors to target "death [...] which can feel most opposed to wholeness" with the intention of "accepting" the painful duality between life and death (12; 12). In this manner, the writer wants to drive out of his psyche the binary conceptualization of appearance and disappearance in existence. Le Clézio, eager to achieve the transcendence of this dyadic thought, continues to "describe this evidence (of the elimination of vital duality) bit by bit" (12, my insertion). This is how the writer attaches himself to hopeful death, the end of the human dyad. This state of mind returns to nothingness in harmony with a state before birth in *L'Extase matérielle*.

### The Possibility of Hope Through Death

In the spirit of what the young author perceives to be signs of happiness, his creative practice contrasts, for example, with the notion of death developed by Montaigne: "[...] death is indeed the end, not for all that the goal of life" (1269). Le Clézio always ponders the essence of death (Jeancard 7) and tends to gravitate towards a fictional universe instead of real life. Many Le Clézian characters

are capable of approaching the fruitful end of a useless life, as opposed to an old man hugging a young naked woman, afraid of death, asking for forgiveness and consolation in Yasunari Kawabata's *The House of the Sleeping Beauties* (83–84). Pollo, for instance, embodies this eccentric attitude about death. In this regard, as Ruth Amar underscores, Pollo is extremely strange, particularly because of his ambiguous and paradoxical identity, where his speech and activity seem enigmatic to the point of being impossible to understand (142–143). On the other hand, this figure only exists through the gaze of the homodiegetic narrator, as summarized by Germaine Brée (22). In the last paragraph of *Le Procès-verbal*, the narrator suggests his upcoming suicide: “While waiting for the worst, the story is over” (248), implying a kind of perfect beauty admired by Isao Inuma in Yukio Mishima's *Runaway Horses* (148).

At first glance, this commentary by the narrator concludes the life of the character confined in an insane asylum in a pessimistic way. Similarly and paradoxically, Pollo's madness is identified as a return “to his mother's womb” (*Le Procès-verbal* 248). This state of mind “recalls with nostalgia a reassuring uterine universe,” as Miriam Stendal-Boulos argues (76). We see optimism in this idea of returning to the uterine fortress. Pollo strives to find an intermediate way to fight against the life-death barrier insofar as this link is experienced as a chain imposed by society. In this framework conceived by the author, happiness or paradise are the finality explaining the irresistible temptation of death which also entices other Le Clézian protagonists from this time period, although none of them can really understand the precise reason. The writer elucidates that their unconsciousness leads to an existential aversion of a conception of the separation of the two entities in a modality of clear opposition, like life and death.

In the context of this “unity” of a binary conception related to Western moral systems that criticize Pollo's behavior as Keith Moser muses (2014, 100–103), the protagonist Mallaussène in the short story “En bas, vers la mort” (1963), for instance, reaches out with his left hand and pulls on the steering wheel of the black Opel that his girlfriend is driving. This destructive temptation encourages this protagonist to steer the car and deliberately cause an accident. The narrator praises his suicidal impulses with optimism as in *Le Procès-verbal*. Similarly, the characters in *La Fièvre* are tempted to let themselves be drawn into an illogical consciousness, where death and life mingle with each other to create a total unity.

Alongside the paradoxical tendencies of the characters, as Masao Suzuki underscores, Le Clézio at the time confused *non-être* (non-being) with *n'être plus* (no longer being) (Suzuki 44–48) in reference to the notions of Vladimir Jankélévitch. In other words, in this context, the conception of death as the negation of life by the disappearance of the body is shattered, and with it the radical opposition between life and death disappears. In an unusual way, the destruction of the body that we observe engenders the rebirth of the spirit. The author, by transposing this idea into his own myth and by creating the fictional universe, reconnects his witness, the reader, to an optimistic conception of suicide.

The young Franco-Mauritian author seeks here to get rid of the obsessions of Western life connected to a consumer society. Le Clézio expresses a preference for poverty rather than the accumulation of goods as Jean Onimus notes (84–86). In other words, his attachment to death comes from contesting the capitalist ideology inherent in postmodern European civilization. The writer expresses the alienation of the freedom of the so-called civilized individual through the figure of the Westerner who is incarcerated inside a drawing representing a prison (Le Clézio, *Le Déluge* 66). The dementia of the characters leads to the life-death barrier in that it keeps the individual under the yoke of the civilization to which they belong and therefore maintains the dyadic conception of being. For Le Clézio, this idea of a frozen image is harmful. From this point of view, a painter in the short story “La Fièvre,” for instance, criticizes European art which aims to detach from reality a piece such as eternity on canvas, because according to him the real painter is a mad man who scribbles endlessly on the ground with chalk (35–47), like Heraclitus' statement: “everything flows.”

Far from the real, the author connected to his novelistic universe seeks to lock himself in his own ecstasy in the manner of death. In this way, it is possible to unite two opposites of the same dichotomous conceptualization in search of a new image of the universe, without ever freezing it.

### The Shift in Consumer Society to a Personal Cosmos

In the novel *Les Choses* (1965) by Georges Perec, it is interesting to see the portrait of a couple constrained and subject to objects in consumer society. This portrait refers directly to the success of the French economy during the 1950s and 1960s. Similarly, the novel *L'homme qui dort* (1967) by Perec recounts the story of a man who tries to escape the omnipresence of objects. During this period, John Kenneth Galbraith expounds on the psychological effects of contemporary advertising, about which he speaks of the "dependence effect" (152-160), while Jean Baudrillard discusses the relationship between objects and man in *Le Système des objets* (1968) and *La Société de consommation* (1970), as Marina Salles cites in her analysis of Le Clézio's early works (2006, 128-130). Against the backdrop of his social situation, an existential discrepancy between the young Le Clézio and consumerist society is becoming clearer. The author reinforces the direction towards his own mythological fiction instead of directly facing the reality of industrialized and consumerist cities.

At the same time, it is possible to link Le Clézio's works of the time to the *Nouveau Roman* (new novel). It was during the publication of *Le Procès-verbal* that *Les Fruits d'or* by Nathalie Sarraute, *Pour un nouveau roman* by Alain Robbe-Grillet, *Degrés* by Michel Butor and *Le Palace* by Claude Simon appeared. Ruth Holzberg, for instance, notices in Le Clézio's works a motif of the degradation of the individual that is reminiscent of Samuel Beckett, as well as the minute detail of the descriptions and the hostility of the invading objects that recalls Robbe-Grillet (163). Admittedly, Le Clézio often criticizes the novelistic approach of Robbe-Grillet in that it tends to grant too much importance to the literary form. In an interview with Madeleine Chapsal, Le Clézio claims to have never read the works of Robbe-Grillet (Chapsal 1963, 31). Nevertheless, we find in *Le Procès-verbal* passages parodying *La Jalousie* as noted by Stendal-Boulos (84). This shows that Le Clézio is fully aware of this literary movement. In reality, he also examines the novelistic form as a framework for artistic representation, in the same way as Robbe-Grillet. Their shared problem is that of the search for a new novelistic approach which would make it possible to reveal an image of reality without ever freezing it, unlike that of the 19th century, where the novelist writes a story dependent on the vicissitudes of fate where the principle of causality remains based on the precise life of the individual.

Le Clézio strives to penetrate the city perceived as a maze where the individual is locked up. A city, a geometric and homogeneous prison without exits through the author's gaze, makes us unable to distinguish the slightest difference between the diversity of an entity and this generalization. This landscape refers to the idea of a "labyrinthine universe" (Hadji 37-38) and to the *Nouveau Roman* movement, and it may bring Le Clézio closer to Marguerite Duras in their attempt to dissect the essence of modern civilization.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, the most fundamental disconnect between Le Clézio's works and the *Nouveau Roman* is found in the creation of cosmology. This conviction stems from the author's mistrust of social norms. Holding himself at a distance not only from Sarrautian consciousness like an amoeba that has not yet formed, but also from the Robbe-Grilletian reality of objects independent of the subject, Le Clézio moves towards the elaboration of his own reality in a self-centered movement.

This defining characteristic of the writer comes from the *nouveau réalisme* (new realism) movement as Bruno Thibault theorizes (2004). This is a group guided mainly by Pierre Restany and Yves Klein, accompanied by the demonstration of "new perceptual approaches to reality," which attempt to grasp the reality of industrialized and consumerist cities (Salles 2006, 165-176). In this regard, the perceptual discernment of the world is in question. Like the principles undergirding *nouveau réalisme*, a consideration of this reality leads Le Clézio to reestablish his own way of apprehending society and acting against its artificial environment. In the case of the author, the indictment of his own civili-



zation results in the destruction of his spiritual prison through recourse to a fictional universe. For the writer immersed in postmodern Western civilization, objects that are inseparable from conventional notions serve as a dualistic symbol that even includes life and death. The relationship between man and object is a recurring theme.

In *Le Procès-verbal*, for instance, Pollo constantly wanders in the “labyrinth of the city” and takes advantage of the point of view of dogs in order to “reconstitute a notion of space and time which would have nothing human” (79; 79). This desire for emancipation stems from disgust for the commercial relationship between the individual and the object whose prices one “couldn’t help reading” (*Le Procès-verbal* 83), a relationship born from the framework of contemporary European civilization. Le Clézio frequently uses the motif of the stripe, which Westerners associate with madness or incarceration, in order to symbolize the idea of prison as Michel Pastoureau argues (95–100). Thus, city dwellers are perceived as ants living “in striped pajamas with striped sheets, and striped pillows, with perhaps striped paper on the bedroom walls, and striped moths bumping into striped lampshades, in striped nights, streaked with neon, striped days of rails and cars” (Le Clézio, *Le Procès-verbal* 80), surrounded by a large number of advertising objects which symbolize consumer society. Life inside the logical, symmetrical city without exits alludes to modern incarceration as Jacqueline Dutton underlines (117). This is to infer that the townspeople are prisoners.

When they are forced to confront reality, many Le Clézian characters feel an existential malaise related to the inability of escaping urban life. Its commercial nature forces the protagonists to rank the objects before their eyes according to their price. In particular, the stripe of the bar code then becomes the sign of the prisoner. They seek to reject the values of consumerist society, while considering that “loving poverty” (Le Clézio, *L’Extase matérielle* 50) is a virtue. They abhor the spectacle of the city spreading out before their eyes. Under these conditions, perceptual discernment subjugates city dwellers to a mental prison placed under high surveillance by a certain convention which defines their scale of values.

In this vein, a paradox arises with characters who feel that “Noises, movements, the dummy are necessary for [them]” (*L’Extase matérielle* 44). This contradiction is central to understanding the behavior of Le Clézio’s characters and their ontological dilemma. Although marginal, they never deviate from the city yet without ever approaching the center. It should be noted that the psychoanalytic physician Rollo May insists on the importance of creating a myth of oneself in order to cure mental illness, a term which refers to an existential crisis in a given society. Given that May’s perspective is in keeping with the sensibilities of the young Franco-Mauritian author, it is therefore a question of reconciling the disagreement with the maternal civilization of the writer where the dualistic conceptualization of life and death inevitably arises. Consequently, Le Clézio, eager to accommodate himself to his original civilization, established his own myth. In this context, it would be possible for him to feel at ease, far from the reality of consumerist society, similar to the narrator of Haruki Murakami’s *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* who decides to stay in a dream world in order to reach the “never spoiled” Self (586).

### The Subject Immersed in a Realm of Black-White Dualism

In order to realize his objective, the writer endeavors to introduce the cosmology of Parmenides into his novelistic cosmos as Suzuki notes with less detail (56). In an interview with Jean Chalon in 1963, Le Clézio’s interest in pre-Socratic philosophers including Parmenides appears obsessively: “Parmenides is at the hotel with me. [...] Parmenides follows me everywhere because I don’t understand him” (Chalon 3). According to this ancient Greek philosopher, in a real universe, there is only one entity that understands everything. This “could be opposed to the cohesion” (Parmenides 262). Moreover, this substance is “completely full of being,” “limited,” “completed” and “inflated like a round ball” (Parmenides 262–263). We still have a few fragments of his treatise in verse *On Nature* that have survived. This treatise is not limited to monistic truth but also mentions dyadic falsehood.

At the beginning of this epic, which follows the example of Hesiod's *Theogony* (Gadamer 121), the goddess appears opposite the poet who puts the sheep to pasture in Mount Helicon. This deity reveals to him the character of the authentic entity, the truth, then that of the illusion which proceeds from this truth (Hesiod 5). In this passage from *On Nature*, it is not by chance that Parmenides is also interested in the opinion of mortals (261–266). According to Hans-Georg Gadamer, the monistic vision of the ancient Greek philosopher distinguishes truth, represented in a ball comprising everything beyond the distinction of objects, from the multiplicity of opinions of mortals perceived as harmful human sensations arising from daily customs (136–137). These opinions of mortals are based on the vital duality of appearance and disappearance. This device enables Parmenides to deepen his understanding of the limitations of human life (Gadamer 132). Owing to his point of view, the human being finds himself trapped within a binary framework from birth to death. This is the ideal cosmogony that Le Clézio gives the reader a glimpse of and to which he aspires from afar, as Michelle Labbé insists (54).

For the young Franco-Mauritian writer who conceives the monist universe as his own myth, the reality of the consumer society before his eyes is comparable to the opinion of mortals like Parmenides, it never reflects the truth. In this context, we penetrate the author's space in the opinion of mortals and truth which refers to Parmenides. The integration of the representation of Parmenides into reality according to Le Clézio allows him to develop his own novelistic vision between the Self and his maternal civilization. In his early works, theses and antitheses in black and white frantically collide inside the opinion of mortals; they kill and annihilate each other in a movement towards the truth. In fragment 1 of *On Nature* by Parmenides, the goddess asserts to the poet that she not only teaches the truth but also the opinion of mortals. The transition between these teachings is found in fragment 8. In lines 50 to 53 of this fragment, the goddess announces: "[...] here I end confident speech And thought aiming at truth. Henceforth learn the opinion of mortals" (253). According to Parmenides, the opinion of mortals, illusion, arises from the human desire to give names to objects which may conform to two opposite characteristics of the same substance. In fragment 9, there is thus the primordial duality of mortals, that of "light" and "dark night" (266; 266). Due to this structure, the deceptive space circulates within a binary structure. Returning to the young Franco-Mauritian author's novelistic universe, the opinion of mortals refers directly to the consumer society of contemporary Europe. This misleading idea of reality, according to the author, reconnects to social norms. In the prologue to *Le Déluge*, which recounts the negation of the genesis where "the world had ceased to be and to have been" (11), a misleading image of reality is first formed from an obscure coloration directly related to the black and white dyad. Then, as everything is divided into two essences,

The hitherto undecided colorations were structured in black and white. Then, according to the essential differences, a part of lights, a part of shadows piled up. (*Le Déluge* 12)

This is how the importance of the black and white binary structure is revealed in Le Clézio's early fiction. This colorless duality reconnects to the genesis of the opinions of mortals, far from the truth in the sense of Parmenides. Starting from the black and white elements that are found in the two poles, a distinction of colored objects appears in opposition to a total entity.

The main idea of *Le Déluge*, after the appearance of the primordial duality of the world, concerns the tragic life of the protagonist François Besson. The latter finally goes blind for having looked directly at the sun in the heart of the so-called city of "counterfeit reality" (*Le Déluge* 46). In this framework, a deceptive reality born of society, the Self is composed of "flesh, color, space, time" (*Le Déluge* 22), like human life and therefore mortal. Besson is aware of his mortal nature, hence he rejects perceived conventional opinions and social norms as a deviation from the monistic truth. Consequently, in the epilogue of *Le Déluge*, the deceptive space of consumerist society is stripped of all colors down to the primordial black and white dyad.



Parallel to Besson's psychic conflict, the character of *Le Procès-verbal* Pollo is also keenly aware of his mortal nature. Therefore, he seeks the development of his own monistic thought in response to the example of Parmenides. The latter helps Le Clézio fight against the terror of death in an effort to reconnect common sense to the extent of the writer's black-white cosmology. Thus Pollo, endeavoring to seek the truth in the sense of Parmenides, lauds fragment 8 of *On Nature* of the aforementioned ancient Greek philosopher in order to renounce the opinion of mortals: "How could things that exist eventually become things that ought to be? How could he be born? Because if he was born, he is not, and he is not either if he must one day come to be. Thus the genesis is extinguished and out of investigation the perishing" (Le Clézio, *Le Procès-verbal* 54–55). The author's works at the time seek not only the truth but also the opinion of mortals, or rather a dialectical movement between the two in order to delve into an impossible unification of the colorless antinomies.

Le Clézio, through his desire to distance himself from the social norms of consumerist society, takes full advantage of the structure of the works *Le Déluge* and *L'Extase matérielle*. In these works, the story begins from the prologue with the image of truth and ends in the same image in the epilogue, alluding to fragment 5 of Parmenides: "[...] Of having to start from one point to another: To this point again I will return again" (259). This eccentric framework of Le Clézian cosmology thus contributes to getting rid of the vision of consumer society as fixed and ossified. The future Nobel Laureate, eager to express his ideal reality, conceives a structure for the work whose first original part is then split in two with the intention of forming the prologue and the epilogue of the work (Borderie 11). The writer then inserts, in the middle of the framework formed by the prologue and epilogue the meaning of the truth in the sense of Parmenides, with the central part of the work aimed at dissecting consumer society as the opinion of mortals.

However, Le Clézio's main interest lies above all in the presentation of characters whose characteristic feature is that they tend to die because of social norms. These mortal protagonists are eager to return to the truth in the sense of Parmenides, at a time when the black and white duality is not yet clear. In these circumstances, two representative approaches to reality reveal states of mind replete with anguish. On the one hand, when we penetrate inside consumerist society, we find the theme of the struggle against objects as in *Le Procès-verbal* and *La Fièvre*. These works are marked by an erosion of the perception of the characters, born of the collective vision of society. Le Clézio, conceiving his narration as an inner experience of his characters where the horrors encountered are magnified to the point of making them descend into madness, composes a fictional universe sometimes by adopting an interior point of view in relation to the characters, sometimes by looking at them from afar, which is not without irony. This narrative approach aims to represent the disagreements of the author but also of the characters with the dominant opinions or social norms. This is why the protagonists always move towards the monistic truth whether it is voluntary or not. On the other hand, the narration is the fulcrum of truth in the sense of Parmenides in *Le Déluge* and *L'Extase matérielle*. The characters are drawn into a circular movement between truth and opinion. In order to present all aspects of Le Clézian thought in the most eloquent way possible, the author attributes to the narrator a broader perspective. This narrative technique allows the reader to get closer to a fictional universe as a space permitting the author to treat all of the objects as he pleases.

Le Clézio, striving to express his ideal imagination, concentrates on visual description. In his interview with Denise Bourdet during the publication of *Le Déluge*, Bourdet remarks that the novelistic style of Le Clézio is characterized by "the acuity of the gaze and the vigilant analysis of sensations" (115), qualifying this writer as a novelist of the gaze. Alain Jouffroy describes the functioning of the author's gaze with the term *stylo-caméra* (pencil-camera): "Le Clézio films his life with his pencil-camera which not only restores to us the visible, but the enormous mass of invisible things which make the visible universe groan, ooze, tremble ceaselessly" (71). This expression also appeals to Le Clézio in reference to the conversation with Pierre Lhoste (15–16). Drawing on the abnormal sensations that lead to monistic truth, the author seeks to describe not only what he sees, but also what he does not see in a literary universe influenced by the thought of Parmenides.

This ancient Greek philosopher, trying to understand the principles of the universe as much as possible, favors intellectual perception over sensuality, yet Parmenides does not deny sensation itself. As the philosopher declares in fragment 7 of *On Nature*: “Resist habit, abundant pretexts, which could lead you to follow this path, where blind eye, deaf ear and tongue still rule everything” (260). Kaname Miura underscores that Parmenides tends to challenge all confidence in sensual experience without excluding it. Thus, the errors of perception refer to the usual way in which sensation is interpreted (Miura 160). Owing to this conviction, Le Clézio's gaze allows the reader to penetrate inside the Self, where everything is in motion between truth and opinion to unite the colorless antinomies which are white and black, dualistic opinions of mortals. Le Clézio agrees with the idea of Parmenides with regard to sensation, so the writer seeks to redress his poor visual discernment in a literary way. The author expresses above all here a distrust of the sensual image resulting from social norms. This is why he concentrates on a literary description that disintegrates before his eyes in search of the monistic truth.

At first glance, there is a paradox between Le Clézio as a novelist of the gaze and his own distrust of sight. Nonetheless, the influence of Parmenides on the author provides the reader with a key to understanding. In fragment 4 of *On Nature*, the philosopher muses, “But see how things absent due to the intellect impose their presence” (258–259). Hans-Georg Gadamer interprets this paradox as the need to perceive what cannot be perceived with the senses, but which nevertheless exists (155). This is how Le Clézio takes advantage of a similar process to encourage us to accept his own truth, in a realm of the black-white dualism which takes aim at an impossible unification of the colorless antinomies. In this context, the author, who leans toward visual description, first endeavors to contradict the opinions of mortals concerning the life-death duality in addition to criticizing consumer society.

Furthermore, the actions and behavior of the characters can be understood by Fragment 6 which reads “Keep your thought away from this false path that opens in search of you” (259–260) as in the short story “L'homme qui marche,” where “infinity is not, it only exists for what is finite” therefore “we must not think” (Le Clézio, *La Fièvre* 126). This strategy seeks to avoid the conception resulting from two opposites of the same substance that prevents monistic thought. This attempt by the characters is the struggle against the dominant mores of society, and it constitutes a central theme of Le Clézio's work. Parallel to this theme of resistance to social norms, the author also mentions that the epigraph of *Le Procès-verbal* can be assimilated into fragment 14: “Shining in the night with a borrowed brilliance, She (= the moon) goes around the Earth” (Parmenides 269, my insertion), as well as fragment 15: “Certainly it (=the moon) looks towards the rays of the Sun” (269, my insertion). This motif of the sun and moon as two sides of mortal opinion shines through Pollo's actions (Chalon 3).<sup>6</sup> In one scene from the novel, for instance, Pollo leaves the abandoned house on the hill to go to the city to look for his girlfriend Michèle. All night he travels through the city without being able to find his lover until the end. Compared to the motif of the sun and moon following the example of Parmenides, Pollo represents himself in the city as a “big sun burning everything in passing, transforming everything into heaps of ashes” (Le Clézio, *Le Procès-verbal* 141). Plutarch in *Against Colotes* interprets the content of fragment 14 of *On Nature* as “the Moon is not the Sun” (Parmenides 269). In other words, the moon may well shine, nevertheless, its brightness will always remain artificial and will never equal the sun. This conception is also linked to Pollo's actions, insofar as he “looks for sunspots everywhere” (Le Clézio, *Le Procès-verbal* 11), concretizing fragment 15. Pollo strives to become the center of the universe like a moon that imitates the sun as the master of sight. Ironically, there is thus the duplication of opinion of mortals, for Pollo is actually moving towards his own opinion in opposition to the conventions of consumer society.

In conclusion, the presence of Parmenides's thought in Le Clézio's early texts is mainly connected to the struggle between two opposites of the same substance, which are clearly found in two opinions of mortals arising from social norms and the opinion of many Le Clézian protagonists connected to a monistic version of the truth. The aporia of the writer's thought lies in figures of speech, especially

in the black and white pair that consists of refusing social norms as reality. In other words, the mental act of uniting two completely opposite poles of the same substance, the antinomies, appears impossible in practice, thus his protagonists are only given access to madness in black-white dualism. Le Clézio's understanding of truth in the sense of Parmenides is always contradictory and risky. We sometimes have access to the characters' point of view which translates into their own opinion close to the truth in the sense of Parmenides. Therefore, these characters find themselves trapped in a vise between their opinion approaching the truth and the point of view of society, thereby transforming their lives into a hell from which they cannot escape resulting in a real hemorrhage of the mind.

Sorbonne University, Paris, France

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.
- <sup>2</sup> Although Marina Salles possesses a keen understanding of how many Le Clézian characters perceive through colors including black and white (2020), her analysis aims to illustrate the pictorial aspect that is not limited to Le Clézio's early works as opposed to his entire philosophical framework on which I have attempted to shed light. Similar to Salles, Isabelle Roussel-Gillet highlights the prevalence of the white-black image related to photography.
- <sup>3</sup> Born in Nice in April 1940, Le Clézio spent a year of his childhood in Ogoja, Nigeria, where his father Raoul, an English military doctor, was transferred. Southeast Asia is therefore not his first experience of living in a non-European country.
- <sup>4</sup> Le Clézio later wrote an article "Lettre à une amie thaïe" in which he expressed his admiration for the "animated silence" that was happening in Thailand (12-14). According to the author, this harmonious order reflects a relationship of equality between nature and men. Alongside this motif, furthermore, we also find the scene taking place in Cambodia in *Le Livre des fuites* (144-149). However, he is less interested in Southeast Asia compared to Africa, America or even East Asia.
- <sup>5</sup> As Jalila Hadji highlights in the works of Duras, this labyrinthian image is connected to a hotel where love and death prowl along multiple circular corridors, some of which only lead to false exits (37). Similarly, Le Clézio is also interested in the circularity of modern civilization without exits in order to deepen his understanding of what it means to be human.
- <sup>6</sup> Originally in the interview, Le Clézio translates into French fragment 14: "Claire autour de la terre errante, lumière d'ailleurs" [Clear around the wandering earth, light from elsewhere] as well as fragment 15: "Toujours portant ses regards inquiétants vers le soleil" [Always bearing her disturbing gazes towards the sun].

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# Answering the Question: How Can Music (and Some of the Arts) Be Sad?

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SHUN-LIANG CHAO

**Abstract:** This paper seeks to explain how music can be sad and how music is different from poetry and from painting in terms of one's experience of sadness in an artwork. Expression theorists like John Dewey believe that music is expressive of emotions because it stems from the spontaneous overflow of the artist's inner turmoil. That is, music, *per se*, has the power to make the listener, say, sad. On the other hand, projection theorists like Stephen Davies maintain that the listener experiences a piece of music as sad because s/he projects his/her sadness onto it or recognises the property of sadness in it. Although nowadays widely considered more valid than the expression theory, the projection theory has been refined by several critics. Jerrod Levinson, for instance, maintains that, in order to recognise or experience the emotions in music, the listener needs to be "appropriately backgrounded" and to listen to music in its (socio-historical and/or intellectual) context. Convincing as it seems, Levinson's notion of an "appropriately backgrounded" audience, I shall argue, applies to poetry better than to music in general, in that poetry, owing to being verbally mediated, must greatly involve the reader's cognitive mediation for him/her to infer the emotions in it.

**Keywords:** comparative arts, emotion, expression, projection, Levinson

For most of us, there is only the unattended  
Moment, the moment in and out of time,  
The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,  
The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning  
Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply  
That it is not heard at all, but you are the music  
While the music lasts.

—T. S. Eliot, "The Dry Salvages" (*Four Quartets* 198-99)

Triste was watching a movie, in which the heroine, who sits on a loveseat looking out the window, is recalling her late fiancé, who died in a car accident the day before their wedding. Her face is sombre, and her eyes are full of tears. Her act of recalling is accompanied by low, slow background music. Triste was moved to tears by this scene, as it reminded her of a similar personal misfortune; she told herself: "Oh, the heroine is so sad, and the music is sad, too." After watching the movie, Triste walked home alone and thought about the scene. The words she said to herself early on whilst watching the scene popped up in her head, and this time she was rather baffled by her own words. "The heroine is sad"; "The music is sad"; "I'm sad, too." "So," she said to herself, "does it mean that my sadness is identical to the music's, as well as to the heroine's? But. . . ." She could not figure out how she, the heroine, and the music all shared the quality of sadness. It was not a question that she and the heroine were sad, insofar as they both can express emotion; but how could the music be sad? If music can be sad, then it means that music expresses sadness, or rather, that music, like human beings, has emotion. "How can music be sad? Does music have emotion?" she murmured.



## I

Expression theorists like John Dewey hold that music possesses emotion—or rather, emotion is proper to music. Espousing Wordsworth's 1800 statement that poetry is "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings" and burgeons from the poet's "emotion recollected in tranquillity" (292),<sup>1</sup> Dewey regards a work of art as an expression of emotion, or really, a product of the inner state of the artist: "There is no expression without [inner] excitement, without [inner] turmoil" (61). More precisely, an art work happens when the expression of emotion as a spontaneous activity "is transformed because it is undertaken as a means to a consciously entertained consequence" (62), namely, when the unintended and the cultivated blend in one. It is fair to say that in Dewey, as Alan Tormey explains, the expressive qualities of an artwork cannot be separated from certain inner states of its author (104). A sad piece of music, so to speak, reflects its composer's sadness.

Opposing Dewey's theory of expression, Tormey argues that the existence of expressive properties in a work of art does not entail a prior act of expression: "The presence of an expressive quality in a work of art is never sufficient to guarantee the presence of an analogous feeling state in the artist. What the music 'expresses' is logically independent of what, if anything, the composer expresses" (121). For if a work of art, as Dewey implies, is an outer behaviour ("expression" means "the action of pressing out") of the artist's inner state, then someone's outer behaviour, say, an angry look, does not guarantee the presence of anger in his/her mind because s/he can just pretend to be angry. To put it another way, a sad piece of music may be simply a product of the composer's pretended/fictitious/intended sadness; or the composer, whilst sinking into woe, may present his/her music as elated, or vice versa. Moreover, it is impossible, Tormey stresses, to observe or know someone's inner states directly, inasmuch as "their presence can only be *inferred* from their external expressions" (50), let alone external expressions can be pretended. That is, there is no ascertaining the inner state of the composer from the very outset, even if s/he claims to intend his/her music as an expression of sadness.

Tormey regards it a mistake in fact to consider the expression of intentional emotions as external indices of inner occurrences. Tormey thus aligns himself with Nelson Goodman's concept of artistic expression: "[W]hat is expressed is possessed, and what a face or picture expresses need not (but may) be emotions or ideas the actor or artist has, or those he wants to convey, or thoughts or feelings of the viewer or of a person depicted. . . . The cheering face of the hypocrite expresses solitude; and the stolid painter's picture of boulders may express agitation" (85–86). In Goodman, as in Tormey, Dewey's theory appears to be rather naïve, in that emotion-wise, external expressions can and should be independent of internal states. Markedly, though, whilst arguing against Dewey, Tormey (as well as Goodman) at least agrees with him that a work of art itself (metaphorically) possesses emotion: "If there is a residue of truth in [Dewey], it is that works of art often have expressive qualities [such as sadness, cheerfulness, etc.]" (124), as writes Tormey.

Unlike Tormey, Stephen Davies, in countering the Deweyan expression theory, goes so far as to say that a work of art is unable to express emotion *per se*:

Emotions are felt and necessarily involve thoughts ... but music is nonsentient, it feels and thinks nothing. Emotions are often expressed in behavior, but music is not an agent, and, hence, is incapable of action. Even if music has dynamic character resembling that of human action, at best music can present movement, not behavior. Music just does not seem the sort of thing that could possess emotional properties. (201–02)<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, to say a piece of music is sad, he continues, is not to say that the music possesses a kind of sadness, but that the listener perceives a resemblance between the dynamic character of the music and the movements, such as gait or bearing, of people who are sad: Just as sad people usually move slowly, so does sad music.<sup>3</sup> This is what Davies calls "emotion characteristics in appearances" (222): we are disposed to find in music—or really, in almost everything we sense—emotion characteristics that correspond to human appearances, actions, or behaviours. Listening to music, so to speak,



somehow personifies music. Davies's argument finds an echo in Malcolm Budd, who has stated, "[T]he sense in which you hear the emotion *in* the music—the sense in which it is an audible property of the music—is that you perceive a likeness between the music and the experience of the emotion" (136–37). That is to say, music is not expressive of emotions in and of itself; a piece of music is sad just because we liken it to our experience of sadness.

Davies anchors the rationale for his argument to the fact that to attribute some kind of emotion, or broadly, adjective, to objects is the way human beings experience the world. Indeed, there is no question of human beings experiencing the world without projecting. "A person," to quote Hans-Georg Gadamer in a different context, "who is trying to understand a text is always projecting" (267). It would be proper to say that the world is a text, and we are accustomed to projecting our fore-conception onto whatever we sense in the world/text: weeping willows, hungry clouds, a joyful painting, a sorrowful poem, and so forth. That is exactly why Budd states: "Music that does not sound like how any emotion feels is not emotionally expressive: you do not hear music as being emotionally expressive *at all* if it does not sound to you like the feeling of emotion; you do not hear it as being expressive of *emotion E* if it does not sound to you like how *E* feels" (138). In other words, whether or not music is expressive of, say, sorrow depends on the listener's personal experience of sorrow. Whilst one piece of music sounds to Léon like anxiety, it might sound to Marie like frivolousness or perhaps nothing.

Hence, one is tempted to say that a projection theory like Davies's is very much listener-orientated: music itself cannot be sad or does not have the property of sadness unless the listener projects his/her sadness onto it. In this sense, the projection theory seems to be antithetical to the expression or arousal theory,<sup>4</sup> which is artist- or artwork-orientated. To say that music is sad, for an expression or arousal theorist, would be to say that, as a product of its composer's sadness, it has the power to make its listener sad—namely, when one listens to music, s/he feels sad. Today the projection theory seems to be widely held as more plausible than the expression or arousal theory, basically because our experience of the sadness of an artwork tends to be a matter of recognising sadness in the artwork rather than a matter of feeling sadness in it. Nonetheless, a number of critics have proffered their revised versions of the projection theory. Bruce Vermazen, for instance, promotes a more circumspect version of the projection theory: "an object expresses a mental property if and only if (subject to certain constraints) attributing that property to an utterer of the object would explain the object's having the features it has, and the property is not one of those presupposed in the attempt to interpret" (207). The "utterer of the object" is that which he calls "the persona"—viz. "the mind whose properties determine the expressive character of a work" (215). For Vermazen, the mind of the persona of a work is that which we are interested in—or rather, to which we attribute our mental properties—when interpreting the work.<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that the persona of a work does not refer to its historical or real author, in that the persona can be plural when the author is not, or in that the author may wind up not having in mind or not recognising the mental properties of the persona(s) of his/her work.<sup>6</sup> In this sense, to say music is sad is to say that the persona(s) of the music—onto whom the listener projects his/her emotions—is sad.

Also, Aaron Ridley's theory of sympathetic (or rather, empathetic?) response seeks to suture together the projection and arousal theories. Taking sides with projection theorists, Ridley admits that our experience of music is to find analogies—that which he terms "melismatic resemblances" (49)—between musical movements and human expressive behaviour. Nevertheless, "melisma itself," he maintains, "isn't expressive—it [is] only *resembling* something expressive. Thus, whilst malisma may well be *responsible* for our experience of music as expressive, it cannot by itself explain what it *is* to experience music as expressive" (50). In other words, mere recognition of human expressive posture that musical movements resemble is not a sufficient *raison d'être* for our experience of music as expressive. Without sympathetic engagement in musical melisma, our recognition of it would be robotic: A robot would be good at recognising expressive signs in, say, a person, whilst lacking the capacity to feel them. And, noticeably, our sympathetic engagement is activated by the object we

sense rather than ourselves: “[I come] to appreciate the melancholy of a weeping willow only as the willow saddens me: I could, of course, merely identify the expressive posture which the willow’s posture resembles; but instead I apprehend its melancholy through a kind of mirroring response. I respond to it *sympathetically*” (52). Here Ridley seems to accede to the fact that objects or works of art have the power to arouse or stimulate our emotions. It is important to note, though, that in Ridley, our recognition of musical melisma and our sympathetic engagement in it are actually two sides of the same coin; they both go together to provide “a bridge from mere *resemblance*, which is what melisma is a form of, to *expressiveness* proper. Melisma is expressive if it’s moving” (54). In terms of Ridley’s theory of sympathetic response, then, to say that music is sad is to say that we at once recognise sadness in music and are saddened by music.

Admittedly, Ridley’s theory of sympathetic response more or less derives from that which Levinson has said of negative emotional response to music:

Responding emotionally to music is clearly consistent with perceiving emotional qualities in it. . . . We are saddened in part by perception of a quality in a passage that we construe as sadness, but we in part denominate that quality “sadness,” or confirm such denomination of it, in virtue of being saddened by the music or sensing its capacity to sadden us under somewhat different conditions. Recognizing emotion in music and experiencing emotion from music may not be as separable in principle as one might have liked. (“Music and Negative Emotion,” 226)<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, Ridley suggests that the listener is always saddened by music whilst judging it to be sad,<sup>8</sup> whereas Levinson does not. In his 1996 postscript to “Music and Negative Emotion,” Levinson, in order to detach himself from the arousal theory, argues against the claim that “listeners are *always*, or even usually, saddened by sad music” (240). Also, in Levinson, what the listener feels empathetic with is the imagined or perceived persona of (sad) music rather than what Ridley calls “musical melisma.” In this sense, Levinson’s theory of musical expressiveness is redolent of Vermazen’s; however, the former is apparently more complicated than the latter.

Levinson’s formulation of musical expressiveness is: “a passage of music P is expressive of an emotion or other psychic condition E *iff* P, in context, is readily and aptly heard by an appropriately backgrounded listener as the expression of E, in a sui generis, ‘musical,’ manner by an indefinite agent, the music’s persona” (*The Pleasure of Aesthetics*, 107). That is to say, 1) music is expressive because the listener “readily and aptly” hears it as the expression of an (indefinite) musical persona; and 2) the listener needs to be properly backgrounded and needs to listen to music in its (socio-historical and/or intellectual) context. It is tempting to say that Levinson’s formulation is more applicable to music expressive of the so-called “higher emotions” such as shame, jealousy, or hope, than to music expressive of general emotions like sadness, joy, or anguish. For usually one need not be “appropriately backgrounded,”<sup>9</sup> nor need contextualise a passage of music, in order to (readily and aptly) hear the music as sad or joyful. The more easily music can express sadness, the less backgrounded the listener needs to be. Thus, it is very likely that a piece of music is heard as an expression of sadness by both a layman in music and a professor of musicology—their difference may be just in degree rather than in kind. (But this would not be the case with music that is heard as expressive of higher emotions.) In a nutshell, to say that music is sad is not, in Levinson’s view, to say that music is possessive of sadness, but to say that the listener recognises the sadness of the indefinite, imagined persona(s) of music, and at the same time (sometimes) feels the same as s/he or them.

## II

Levinson’s view of an “appropriately backgrounded” audience—if it stands—would apply to poetry better than to music in general, in that, unlike music, poetry, in which emotions are perceived, has a semantic dimension from which emotions are inferred. Hence, in order to infer emotions in poetry, understanding the semantic content of a poem is indispensable; on the other hand, under-

standing a piece of music need not be required in order to perceive emotions in the music. That is why Robinson suggests that “music can *directly* affect our feelings . . . without much, if any[,] cognitive mediation” (18).<sup>10</sup> By contrast, poetry cannot affect our feelings, unless we are “appropriately backgrounded” enough to understand its semantic content. Certainly, we are very likely to perceive and be affected by sadness or grief in, say, the *Marcia funebre* of Beethoven’s *Eroica* symphony, without necessarily understanding it. That would not be the case, however, with, say, Emily Dickinson’s Poem 88:

As by the dead we love to sit,  
 Become so wondrous dear—  
 As for the lost we grapple  
 Tho’ all the rest are here—  
  
 In broken mathematics  
 We estimate our prize  
 Vast—in its fading ratio  
 To our penurious eyes! (44–45)

We can infer that this poem—or really the speaker—expresses a great regret for the death or loss of a beloved one, only if we understand what this poem means. We love to sit by the dead because they are gone forever; sitting by the dead is then the only way we can *get in touch with* them. Hence, their eternal absences make them “so wondrous dear” as to outshine “all the rest here” in our lives. Mathematics is “broken” (disabled), inasmuch as the deaths of those who are precious to us are too costly to be estimated by mathematics. Their being alive was our prize, which was nevertheless too vast to be perceived by “our penurious eyes”; ironically, not until their lives are “fading” away do our narrow eyes open enough to see just how vast is our prize, how “wondrous dear” they are to us. But by then it is too late for us to grasp for those lost. Death thus becomes a paradox: Death, albeit a heart-rending event, awakens us to the value of life; i.e., without death, life would not be worthy of being cherished.

Reading this poem by Dickinson, we need to be “appropriately backgrounded” to apprehend its figurative meanings, thereby inferring the emotion in it—to wit, the speaker’s grievous reflection on death. Poems such as this one by Dickinson, then, tend to be like the kind of music (that is heard by a properly backgrounded listener as) expressive of higher emotions such as hope. Normally, the situation that both a layman in music and a professor of musicology may hear a piece of music as sad would not be true of poetry. For unlike musical scores, poetic language, or broadly literary language, is not a transparent means of communication through which one can “directly” recognise and/or identify with the emotions in poetry. Literature, notably poetry, is rich in what Paul de Man calls the “rhetorical dimension of language”—e.g., figures of speech—that undermines or destabilises a given text’s goal of grammatical and logical consistency: “no grammatical decoding, however refined, could claim to reach the determining figural dimensions of a text. There are elements in all texts that are by no means ungrammatical, but whose semantic function is not grammatically definable, neither in themselves nor in context” (15–16).

Accordingly, reading a literary text can be likened to looking through a stained-glass window; the meaning of a text thus constantly flickers and slides, becomes full of blanks that “[have] to be, but cannot be” (de Man 15) filled by grammatical means. Under such circumstances, to understand poetry or literature, we need what Jonathan Culler calls “literary competence”:

[A]nyone wholly unacquainted with literature and unfamiliar with the conventions by which fictions are read, would, for example, be quite baffled if presented a poem. His knowledge of the language would enable him to understand phrases and sentences, but he would not know, quite literally, what to *make* of this strange concatenation of phrases. He would be unable to read it *as* literature—as we say with emphasis to those who would use literary works for other purposes—because he lacks the complex ‘literary competence’ which enables others to proceed. He has not internalized the ‘grammar’ of literature which would permit him to convert linguistic sequences into literary structures and meanings. (114)

That which Culler calls “the ‘grammar’ of literature” is that which Paul de Man calls the “rhetorical dimension of language.” Knowing the “grammar” of literature is essential to infer sadness that a poetic speaker expresses, whereas knowing the “grammar” of music seems not always to be required to perceive sadness of a musical persona. To put it another way, we must be literarily competent, or “appropriately backgrounded,” in order to read a poem as sad and then feel sad; on the other hand, we need not be musically competent to hear a passage of music as sad and at the same time feel sad.

This situation, as I mentioned early on, has much to do with the fact that music does not have a concrete semantic/cognitive content as does poetry. Music’s lack of a concrete semantic content also makes music, as Kendall Walton argues, an abstract art, which, unlike poetry, fails to express subtle differences between similar emotions: “music can’t distinguish between love, longing, and religious fervor (not without a title or a text or program notes), or between piety and eroticism, but it may express more general ‘ideas’ from which cognitive elements have been abstracted” (356). Nonetheless, the abstractness of music largely allows the liberty of the imagination, which boosted the use of music—in place of painting—to illustrate the essential nature of poetry in the Romantic age, when imagination, as opposed to imitation,<sup>11</sup> was the first and foremost principle of (poetic) creation: Poetry “is the music of language, answering to the music of the mind. . . . There is a near connection between music and deep-rooted passion. Mad people sing,” said William Hazlitt in “On Poetry in General” (1818) (24). As a matter of fact, as early as 1766, G. E. Lessing, whilst privileging poetry over painting, had ascribed imagination to poetry: “This invisibility [of poetry] leaves the imagination free play to enlarge the scene at will. . . . But painting must accept a visible theatre” (78). It would be proper to conclude, then, that poetry is in the middle of the road whose two ends are music (the abstract) and painting (the concrete) respectively: actually, language, the medium of poetry, is the very composite of sound (music) and sight (painting) *per se*. In contrast to (figurative) painting, poetry and music have the wider sphere of the imagination. On the other hand, poetry and painting, different from music, can represent or express more specific images and emotions.

### III

Nonetheless, in some sense, painting tends to be more like music than poetry. Because of its immediate concreteness, painting, as Robinson has said of music, “can *directly* affect our feelings . . . without much, if any[,] cognitive mediation.” That is, like emotions in music, emotions in painting—representational or figurative—are not so much inferred as (straightforwardly) perceived. Leonardo da Vinci wrote of the immediately affecting power of pictorial images on the viewer:

And when a picture is unveiled, a great multitude assembles there and the people *immediately* throw themselves upon the ground adoring and praying to Him who the painting depicts and praying for the turn of health and for eternal salvation, just as though the living divinity were actually present. . . . [*It is the painted image that causes them, something which all the writings about the subject could not do* (italics mine). (10)

Suffice it to look at Picasso’s *Old Jew and a Boy* of 1903, one of his “Blue Period” paintings. Just as the listener would *directly* recognise sadness in music and (presumably) at the same time feel sad, the viewer—who need not be appropriately backgrounded—would *directly* or vividly recognise and identify with sadness in this painting: the cold, melancholy colour, the shabby, blind old man with a gaunt face and emaciated feet, the dull-looking eyes of the boy, and so forth.

Some distinctions still exit, however, between painting and music. In terms of the relation of the appreciator to works of art, for instance, viewers, as Walton remarks, “imagine themselves seeing and identifying some one individual person, even if the picture indicates very little about how he or she differs from other people.” By contrast, the imagined persona(s), or emotions, of music that listeners identify with are indeterminate, in that music may portray the notion of, say, sadness, but not particular instances of someone’s being sad (Walton 359). Also, “[t]here might easily be,” as

Walton notes,

a painting representing a cold scene, which I recognise as such, even if it has no tendency at all to make me feel cold. . . . But if a passage of music has no tendency at all to elicit in me anything like a feeling of tension, if I don't hear it as something that might, under favorable circumstances, make me feel tense, I would not, I think, be inclined to call it tense. ("Projectivism, Empathy, and Music Tension," 415–16)

In other words, music, because of its abstract nature, is less expressive than painting—at least from the perspective of the appreciator.

Even though music, poetry, and painting, as we have seen, somehow differ from each other in expressing sadness or emotions, their differences are in degree rather than in kind. They all belong in the pigeonhole of "expression."<sup>12</sup> Since they are considered as expressive of emotions, they provide, to quote Scruton, "us with a means not merely to project our emotions outwards, but also to encounter ourselves *in* them," a "realization" of our emotion that recalls what Hegel terms the *Entäußerung* (Scruton 348). This may be what William Blake had in mind when describing his vision of the Last Judgment: "Poetry, Painting & Music, [are] the three Powers in Man of conversing with Paradise, which the flood did not Sweep away" (412). In addition to the question "How can arts be sad?" the "realization" of our emotions would be another issue worthy of being spelt out.

*National Chengchi University, Taipei, Taiwan*

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> M. H. Abrams summarises the very spirit of the expressive theory based on Wordsworth's concept of poetry: "A work of art is essentially the internal made external, resulting from a creative process operating under the impulse of feeling, and embodying the combined product of the poet's perceptions, thoughts, and feelings. The primary source and subject matter of a poem, therefore, are the attributes and actions of the poet's own mind" (22).

<sup>2</sup> Here Davies's statements are reminiscent of Richard Wollheim's 1993 remarks: "Must nature have features that encourage and sustain the projection [of the person's psychology]? Or is this unnecessary? What seems certain is that, unless there is some such substrate, there can be no justification for saying that what the person experiences in the aftermath of projection is a *property* of nature" (152).

<sup>3</sup> One of Davies's precursors is O. K. Bouwsma, who says in "The Expression Theory of Art": "Sad music has some of the characteristics of people who are sad. It will be slow, not tripping; it will be low, not tinkling. People who are sad move more slowly, and when they speak, they speak slowly and low" (266). As a matter of fact, the connection between (musical) emotion and (human) motion is already present in the components of the word "emotion" itself. It has both psychological and physical quality: in addition to its psychological sense, "emotion," according to the *OED*, also signifies "A moving, stirring, agitation, perturbation (in physical sense)."

<sup>4</sup> The arousal theory can be traced far back, at least to Plato, who, for instance, writes of poetry in the *Republic*: "Now we can see how right we'd be to refuse him [the poet] admission into any community which is going to respect convention, because now we know which part of the mind he wakes up. He destroys the rational part by feeding and fattening up this other part, and this is equivalent to some destroying the more civilized members of a community by presenting ruffians with political power." This "other part," as opposed to the rational part, refers to the irrational or emotional part of the mind, "an aspect of ourselves which we forcibly restrain when tragedy strikes our own lives—an aspect which hungers after tears and the satisfaction of having cried until one can cry no more, since that is what it is in its nature to want to do" (602c–608b, 354–62). Aristotle's celebrated poetics of *katharsis* can be seen as a de-stigmatisation of poetic tragedy's power to awaken the emotional part of the mind.



- <sup>5</sup> Jerrold Levinson, in *The Pleasure of Aesthetics*, takes Vermazen's notion of persona a step further by saying that the persona is the one who is imagined to utter the *content* of the work rather than *the work*. See note 34, chap. 6.
- <sup>6</sup> Roland Barthes has said of the dissociation of the author from the utterer in his/her work: "[T]he whole of the enunciation is an empty process, functioning perfectly without there being any need for it to be filled with the person of the interlocutors. Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance saying *I*: language knows a 'subject', not a 'person'" (145). Here Barthes's observations prefigure Michel Foucault's notion of the "plurality of egos" that characterises various kinds of discourse: "In a mathematical treatise, the ego who indicates the circumstances of composition in the preface is not identical, either in forms of his position or his function, to the 'I' who concludes a demonstration within the body of the text. The former implies a unique individual who, at a given time and place, succeeded in completing a project, whereas the latter indicates an instance and plan of demonstration that anyone could perform provided the same set of axioms, preliminary operations, and an identical set of symbols were used. It is also possible to locate a third ego: one who speaks of the goals of his investigation, the obstacles encountered, its results, and the problems yet to be solved and this 'I' would function in a field of existing of future mathematical discourses" (1631).
- <sup>7</sup> Levinson writes of the mechanism of the listener's responding to music elsewhere: "Which is prior—how the music makes you feel, or what the music sounds like to you? The answer is probably neither. Instead, there is shifting between the two, resulting in some sort of cognitive equilibrium being reached between them. Certainly one pattern is that, often, the music makes one feel a certain way, *e*, and then one starts to find, as a consequence, that the music sounds like *E*—that is, like someone expressing *E*, where *e* is related to *E* by similarity, association, or partial identity. On the other hand, just as often the music first strikes one as sounding like *E*, and then subsequently an *E*-related feeling, *e*, develops in its wake" (*The Pleasure of Aesthetics*, 114). In other words, in Levinson, the listening process is dialectical.
- <sup>8</sup> Ridley writes in "Musical Sympathies": "If I judge someone's behavior to be expressive of, say, melancholy, then I am saying at the same time that I know something of what his melancholy is like, what it would be like to be in the state which his gestures reflect: my judgment is partly felt. Which means that in order properly—and in the fullest sense—to attribute expressive predicates to a person, my judgment must *always* involve an element of feeling or of affective response" (53).
- <sup>9</sup> Here I have to echo Roger Scruton's view that Levinson's notion of "an appropriately backgrounded listener" is sceptical: "how is this class defined and by whom?" (353). By the same token, Robert Stecker has a similar doubt about Levinson's view. See section III in his "Expressiveness and Expression in Music and Poetry," in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 59:1 (2001).
- <sup>10</sup> Robinson continues: "[T]he perception of certain rhythms may be enough—without any further cognitive mediation—to evoke tension or relaxation, excitement or calm. If the melodic and harmonic elements in a piece of music affect our emotions, this would seem to require familiarity with the stylistic norms of the piece, but no further cognitions need be required in order for us to feel soothed, unsettled, surprised, or excited by developments in the music. Certainly we need not notice that we are listening to canon at the fifth in order for that canon to sooth us" (18–19).
- <sup>11</sup> Interestingly enough, "imagination" etymologically derives from "image," whose Latin origin *imāgo* ("copy," "semblance," "picture," etc.), according to the *OED*, contains the same root as *im-ītārī* ("to imitate").
- <sup>12</sup> Postmodern art is held as shorn of expression, but, I would suggest, the lack of expression itself is some kind of expression. For the absence of expression in postmodern art, see Fredric Jameson's *Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke UP, 1991), chapter 1.

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# The Wounds of History and the Strategies for Survival in Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*

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PUSPA DAMAI

**Abstract:** This article revisits Korean American author Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's experimental and quasi-autobiographical "novel," *Dictée*. Cha's work has been discussed primarily from the point of view of American ethnic studies by focusing on the issues of immigration, assimilation, race, gender, and ethnicity. Some of the readers of Cha's texts also highlight the author's proclivity for avant-gardist and postmodernist experimentations. This article deploys the lenses of critical theory (Agamben), deconstruction (Derrida and Nancy), and postcolonial theory (Bhabha and Spivak) to argue that the subject emerging from Cha's works occupies the spaces of exception, spectrality, and subalternity.

**Keywords:** *Dictée*, exception, subaltern, spectrality, survival

## Figures of Dictation

Theresa Hak Kyung Cha (1951–1982) was a Korean American writer and filmmaker. She was born in South Korea during the Korean War, and she accompanied her parents to America when they immigrated in 1962. She attended school in Korea, France, and the United States. She earned a BA in Comparative Literature and an MFA from the University of California, Berkeley. Cha pursued Film Studies in Paris, and upon her return from France, she went on to perform and produce a number of films. In 1979, she traveled to her native South Korea, an experience that would haunt her experimental work, *Dictée* (1982). Only a few days after the publication of this great work of art, Cha was raped and murdered in New York on November 5, 1982. Remembered as "a patron saint" of Korean American Literature (Kwon), Cha's life and work continue to inspire Asian American artists and scholars. In *Exilee and Temps Morts* (1980), Cha calls her readers "distant relatives," and expresses her wish that though not visible to each other, she can safely assume that the audience "can hear me/I can only hope that you hear me" (18–19). Her work, especially *Dictée*, continues to resonate in times of war, pandemics, and the rise of authoritarianism across the globe.

*Dictée* is a collage of multiple narratives, voices, genres, and languages. It is an intertextual mosaic of uncaptioned photographs and images, multiple characters from history, myth, and religion, poems echoing Baudelaire and Mallarmé, newspaper clippings, personal letters, political documents, calligraphy, and lessons in language and translation. Its experimental tendencies towards anti-developmental and seemingly incoherent narratives are enough to make the readers feel "put off by the book" (Kim 3). Elaine H. Kim attributes this remote familiarity of the text to Cha's position in the interstitial outlaw spaces between languages, cultures, histories, and nations (23), an outcome of *Dictée's* creation and celebration of the "third space" (8). Kang corroborates this poetics of the exilic space by arguing that *Dictée's* slipperiness and its inexhaustible fragmentariness open up provocative and meaningful readings (Kang 75), thereby changing the silenced dictée into a "liberatory voice." Lisa Lowe goes a step further to argue that *Dictée* upsets the pattern of dictation by performing an

aesthetic of infidelity (130). According to Wong, *Dictée* refuses links to American Bildung and frustrates the “organicist teleology” of the Western aesthetics built upon the “site of reconciliation and resolution” (47).

While building upon these insightful readings, this essay tries to problematize the concept of the “third space” and its “liberatory voices” in order to flesh out the stakes involved in being the inhabitant of “outlaw spaces.” *Dictée* as the “writing of disaster” enumerates the perils, rather than the exhilaration, of living in the exilic space, which is no less than what Agamben would call a sphere of sovereign ban or exception where the nomic and the anomic are indistinguishable and a person turns into a homo sacer. While arguing that the dictée of the text is a homo sacer, this essay also traces the itinerary of modern “indistinguishable” subjects with their overlapping identities and conflicting histories, and it argues that the moment of colonial encounter resembles what Agamben calls “the dislocating localization” (175).

Agamben’s analysis of the sphere of exception of course does not mention some of the events and instances evoked by Cha, for instance, the Japanese invasion of Korea and the imposition of a series of new laws, new language, new dresses, and new names to ban everything that is Korean. *Dictée* seems to portray the sphere of exception where one neither belongs to the patriarchal pre-colonial Korea, nor to the colonial regimes of drafting and disciplining, nor even to the post-colonial (unformed) military rules, let alone to the First World, where the dictée is merely someone “from afar.” This ban or abandonment in *Dictée* is more effective and immediate than Kafka’s open door of the law, for it censors and dismisses (Cha, *Dictée* 58).

If Agamben in his analyses demonstrates how law passes periodically and continually into the extra-legal, *Dictée* weaves the personal genealogy of utter rootlessness and breaks with national history. It also combines the trope of dictation, apprenticeship, and education to articulate how learning prefigures various forms of dictations at work repeatedly throughout history. The book shows how inversely the figures of the ban can be turned into a real source of dictation towards unlearning the dictations of history and the possible healing of history’s wounds. Three theoretical strands are evoked here: Kant’s definition of Enlightenment as “man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage” (Kant 263); Derrida’s notion of heterodidactics in *Specters of Marx*, a kind of learning from the borders of life and death, which he seems to suggest is impossible to do by anyone else than an immigrant (Derrida, *Specters* xviii), for the latter has the benefit of a certain spirit of spectrality or de-ontologized existence: a displaced, stateless and nomadic ghostliness; and the recurring guidelines for global justice in Spivak – learning from below or the apprenticeship to the muted others of history. That is to say, Cha’s use of dictée is nuanced and ambivalent inasmuch as she engages the trope to elucidate and expose the patterns of dictation, control, and hegemony in all of their “metaphysical subtleties” along with thwarting the lessons learned under duress. Cha also opens the possibility of lending a voice to, learning from, and “figuring” the repressed others of history. Cha’s narratives do not necessarily evoke an act of displacing a “being” that dictates, for we need to raise the question of whether the victims of history (of colonial regimes and patriarchy) are attributed to any “being” in the first place. The “impossible” learning from the aphasic is testimony rather than teaching or training. It is to attend and bear witness to the ravages of history that erased the survivors’ proper names, tongues, and bodies into ghostly anonymity.

Jean-Luc Nancy opens *The Inoperative Community* with the evocation of this “gravest and most painful testimony”: the testimony of the dissolution and the dislocation of community (Nancy 1). Not only that *Dictée* imagines and performs what Nancy calls an “inoperative community,” based on communication without communion, an event without the work, a community yet to come; but also, that, like Nancy’s community, *Dictée* is haunted by loss and death. In the same way, as Nancy goes beyond the myths of immanence, sociality, or intersubjectivity and “the phantasms of metaphysics” with his singular logic of “being-together or being-with, and of the crystallization of the community around the death of its members” (14), *Dictée* constellates issues across cultures, nations,

and languages by bringing, for instance, Greek muses and Korean history of resistance together. My reading of *Dictée*, therefore, is not only a bringing together of texts that try to say what is too traumatic for words, too heavy for memory, yet too painful to not breathe a word: “*It murmurs inside. It murmurs. Inside is the pain of speech the pain to say. Larger still. Greater than is the pain not to say. To not say*” (Cha, *Dictée* 3); but it is also a demonstration of how learning or, in Nancy’s terms, “communication” takes place at the limit, the borders of nations and selves, with the singular exposure to the other, and her loss and death (Nancy 67).

If the “third, extra-legal space” *Dictée* opens is also the political space of complete severance, abandonment, and exile, dictation in it is not only a socio-political or pedagogic hegemony critiqued in postcolonial and anti-canon readings, nor just as an instrument of correction, civilizing, disciplining and silencing, but also as a strategy for articulation or a politics of ventriloquism. *Dictée* can be traced back to Latin *dictare*, to write down, to fore-tell something to be written down, to poetize, or *dichten*, as the Germans would say. If etymologically dictée signifies poetizing in general, it is also a “graphematology” that tries to inscribe (in this case) what is otherwise considered not worth recording. Or as the act of for-telling by the *disease*, it inaugurates, to recall Nancy, without trying to found any myth or community (Nancy 68).

Elaine H. Kim identifies three silences *Dictée* is trying to address and articulate: the absence of Korean history from the master narratives of the West, the absence of women from the recorded Korean history, and the absence of Korean Americans in both of them (Kim 19). Two more explorations complicate this gesture of articulation: Lisa Lowe’s Althusserian reading of *Dictée* in which she discerns a subject coming into being through interpellation, or by being hailed by various state apparatuses and institutions; and Anne Anlin Cheng’s Judith Butlerian response to Lowe, which identifies the echo already in the subject before any interpellation or dictation and tries to locate the “being” of *Dictée* in that very echo, reading the text as an echo chamber of racial melancholy, a fantasmatic echolalia of decontextualized and disembodied voices and displaced beings. Trinh Minh-ha’s poetics of “keeping and transmitting” also falls into this category, which defines *Dictée* as “a lifetime story” handed down from “Disease, Thought-Woman, Spider-Woman, griotte, storyteller, fortune-teller, [and] witch” (Minh-ha 121). I am interested in the task of “bringing into figuring,” (not “being,”), the exterminated (rather than the interpellated) subjects through learning and reading as resurrecting (Cha, *Dictée* 33). The learning proposed in *Dictée* is therefore a reopening of the wounds and the tombs of history, a pursuit of “figures” untimely burnt as in Spivak and the un-received armies of ghosts and “Specters” as in Derrida; it is an attempt at restoring and reiterating the lost documents and missing narratives; a perpetual search for healing and an indefatigable move towards a lost reference, or towards a contested site of home “forever in the making” (Wong 47). In the course of following these fading but forceful figures dictating *Dictée*, I will also juxtapose them: specters v. subalterns, the exiles v. the native informants only to venture a suggestion in the end that the distinction between the specters and the subalterns gets blurred in Cha; and *Dictée* ends with a figure, who learns from all spaces but is left with none for herself, in whom there opens a wound instead, a monstrous leakage between the specter and the native informant, between mothers and daughters, and nations and generations.

Unlike Cheng’s grudge about *Dictée*’s politically neutral intentions, as she thinks it is difficult to locate a political subject in it (141–2), and unlike Ling’s critique of its heavy ‘materiality,’ by which he means its text-centricity devoid of practical or ideological work, a politics of dehistoricization and despatialization, which he calls an offspring of “Nietzschean perspectivism,” or an “avant-garde celebration of difference” (Ling 9), *Dictée* belongs to “the political” inasmuch as the “bare life” of the dictée inclusively excluded in a zone of indistinction between articulation and aphasia, between citizenry and the state of being a mere human, has not only the “capacity to be killed,” (Agamben 125), but *pace* Agamben, is actually and perpetually victimized by the national and international states of abandonment, capture, and exception. On the one hand, therefore, we need to rethink the

concept of sovereignty in the international context, on the other hand, we need to redefine Schmitt's friend-enemy antagonism, which for him is *the* determining characteristic of the political (Schmitt 26), not only in terms of the *demos* and people but also nations. Referring to the partition of Korea, which is largely, *a la* Cha, an act of "friendship," or more precisely an act of friendship by the "liberators," who as the invisible enemy-friend severed Korea in two, and "who have conveniently named the severance, Civil War. Cold War. Stalemate" (Cha, *Dictée* 81), Cha interrogates the concept of the political and sovereignty not only by exposing what Derrida, while discussing Schmittian analysis of two forms of diaphorá: *pólemos* and *stásis*, calls "a pathology of community," or "an evil naturally affecting nature" (Derrida, *Politics* 92); but also by critiquing the role that the friends and liberator nations played in the partition:

The "enemy." one's enemy. Enemy nation. Entire nation against the other entire nation. One people exulting the suffering institutionalized on another. The enemy becomes abstract. The nation the enemy the name becomes larger than its own identity. Larger than its own measure. (Cha, *Dictée* 32)

In other words, Cha not only interrupts the Schmittian myth of friendship without any discord, the myth of one nation, one tongue, and one home without "articulation" or division; but by implicating the rest of the world in the act of deciding or proclaiming the enemy, she interrogates the concept of sovereignty as an intra-state matter between the people and the state. The unruly muse of *Dictée* alternates between high poetic eloquence and severe traumatic aphasia, while the pulse of the text throbs back and forth between the Greek muses to the Korean version of the Geisha, between ancient myths to post/colonial histories, French poetry to Taoist tables, and modern films to Chinese calligraphy. As the frontiers of a nation get drawn and redrawn, along with the fate of the dispersed and the displaced people, who find themselves "lost," sometimes groaning like the immigrant in the new world (Cha, *Dictée* 3), and other times whispering one's language under the ban like birds (48), not even like "bare humans," *Dictée* "inaugurates" the discourse of those whose "destination is fixed on the perpetual motion of search. Fixed in its perpetual exile" (Cha, *Dictée* 81). It poses a challenge to reading as mastery insofar as the text constantly reminds us of what we, in spite of our best efforts, miss in the very process of reconstructing it. Like the narrator in "Melpomene Tragedy," who goes to Korea only to witness her brother's cold-blooded murder once again, a reader, too, encounters a perpetual return of defeat and loss of meaning.

In Kant, the root of aphasia is traced back either to the unenlightened tyrants, who demand complete submission without arguments, or to the self-cultivated human fears and prejudices, and myths and religions that keep us into a state of cowardice and immaturity, and he believes that separation of public and private uses of reason would explode the aphasic state of humanity into a bustling age of enlightenment in which one is allowed to argue as much as one likes, but is expected to obey in return (Kant 263–264). This is exactly what is impossible in *Dictée*, not only because the arguments are literally impossible for the mimicking and groaning dictée, but also because the boundaries of the private and the public in it are eroded through the self-replicating rounds of layered dictations. The grainy picture, "with which the text opens" (Wong 46), is an inscription on the wall by a Korean drafted worker in a Japanese coal mine, which only prefigures the brutalities of the Japanese and their imposition of a new language, laws, and government on Koreans. The colonial dictation is repeated by the religious dictation, which is no less coercive with its injunctions about sins, confession, and later excommunication (Cha, *Dictée* 105). This religious dictation is further complemented in the text by marital dictation: "Still the apprenticeship of the wife to her husband" (104). And a couple of pages later: "Perhaps she learned to love him" (110). Even the "survivor's identity" of the First World is cast in the same relationship of learning and apprenticeship: "One day you raise the right hand and you are American. They give an American Passport. . . . And you learn the executive branch and the legislative branch and the third. Justice. Judicial branch. It makes the difference. The rest is past: (56).

Rituals and religions in *Dictée* occasion speech. The evocation of the nine Greek muses and the catholic novena, which could be the echo of the ancient Korean text, *Nine Cloud Dream* (Stephens 197), constitute the formal principle of this otherwise amorphous text. The dictée also makes most of the memory by memorizing the lesson and by evoking *Mnemosyne*, the Mother of muses, which replicates Cha's attempts to "write" her mother with her suffering during her exile in Manchuria, all instances of counter-memory to the official version of history. She also exploits the catechism, its otherwise strict rules and regulations, to subvert it without arguments: "*I am making up the sins. For the guarantee of absolutions. . . I am making the confession. To make words. To make a speech in such tongues*" (17) (emphasis original).

Cha not only re-mythologizes enlightenment, but she also tries to work out absolution through dictation. She "grounds" Kant's tendency to exalt reason to the sky, at the same time to reduce it to mere reasoning by foregrounding the gendered body (Cooley 123) over the vacuous enlightened self. In contrast to Lee's elision of the geographically, racially and sexually marked body in the text, *Dictée* has "no textual body" . . . "no corporeal entity" (Lee 243), *Dictée* is body writ large with "words more naked than flesh, stronger than bone, . . .," as runs the epigraph, and the body it evokes is a pulverized body full of festering wounds – the wounds of history: Yu Guan Soon's stabbed body, the "decapitated forms" of the Koreans during the Japanese occupation, the students' bleeding bodies that left indelible marks of blood on the stone pavement, the exile's "formless, immaterial body given to disuse or dissolution limb by limb" (Cha, *Dictée* 161), the broken tongue of the pupil at work in speaking, the map of Korea ripped into two by the DMZ, the drafted Korean's scar-like etching on the wall, the only lead towards the nameless subjects and the missing narratives of colonial history, to say nothing of the wounding and bleeding made coexistent to the act of writing, the multiple wounds of the saints and proleptically, the wounds to which the writer of this text herself succumbed to.

### Learning from Above and Below

For Cha aphasia is as much a result of our affective state caused by our fears and prejudices as it is historical, physical, political, and textual, impacting our bodies including the body of the nation, the body of the texts, and the bleeding bodies of the workers and the comfort women. If Kant's enlightened individual is a split subject that harkens at once to reason as well as to the ruler, Cha's narrators conjure *Mnemosyne* to recall Yu Guan Soon, the Korean woman leader against the Japanese occupation. The narrators in *Dictée* come close to Spivak's pupils in a rural Indian night school without electricity, where they do basic letters and numbers in their spare time from the daily chores and are bound to rely more on memory than what they see on the page, hence the necessity of memorization and the possibility of "reading" something quite different from the page they are following with finger and eye (Spivak, *Thinking* 19). This deconstructive misreading or dictation gone awry is not what Homi Bhabha calls "emulate but equivocate" when he describes "colonial mimicry" that he thinks partializes colonial presence (Bhabha 88). The dictation also differs from Neil Larsen's fear of subalterns turning into agents of deconstruction to the effect of making Derrida superfluous (Larsen 48). This delicate learning with obedience but unavoidable freedom is what Spivak calls "learning from below," as opposed to teaching and correcting the subaltern from above. The dictée disturbs dictation sessions by being too faithful to what is being dictated. Not unlike Spivak's students in the night school, Cha's dictée spells out punctuation marks instead of using them as signs: "Open paragraph It was the first day period She had come from a far period" (Cha, *Dictée* 1).

To confront multiple dictations from above, Cha and Spivak let their texts be "informed," "figured," and "written and spoken" by the repressed and the silenced. They shuttle between the worlds, not for abstract data, but to listen to the muted others of history, and to neutralize the compulsion to repeat history in oblivion (Cha, *Dictée* 33). Spivak detects the subtle epistemic denial, an absence of the structure of responsibility to a subaltern's "effort to the death to speak" (Spivak, *The Spivak* 293); hence her critique of Foucault-Deleuze anti-representationalism, especially the latter's declaration



that representation no longer exists (Foucault 1977: 206). Cha's world is inundated, on the one hand, with the violence of colonial translation (Niranjana 32) examples of which are the brutal killing and drafting of the colonized into forced labor and the complete erasure of proper names and mother tongues. On the other hand, Cha's world also promotes a form of learning in which one articulates oneself in an obsessive and compulsive way, thereby exceeding the scope of what Cheng calls "the Althusserian hypnotic mirroring" of colonial dictation (Cheng 158) and paving the way for learning from, and apprenticeship to, the figures of the repressed other. Min's reading of the figure of dictation not as an originary, but as a secondary and sequential act (Min 310), Wong's detection of Cha's apocryphalizing of muses — (Euterpe changed into Elitiere) — (Wong 51), make it clear that by absenting the "tutelary present" in the text, Cha "dictates" the muses into relating the stories about the colonized, the displaced and the *dépaycée*:

I write. I write you. Daily. From here. If I am not writing, I am thinking about writing. I am composing. Recording movements. You are here I raise the voice. Particles bits of sound and noise gathered pick up lint, dust. (56)

And a couple of pages later:

*She says to herself if she were able to write she could continue to live. She says to herself if she could write without ceasing. To herself if by writing she could abolish real time. She would live.* (141) (emphasis original).

"Dictation" here therefore is not a remotely controlled command sent by a distant Master from the past, as in Ronell (1986: xvi), or a mechanically maintained docility or *dressage* (Foucault, *Discipline* 166), it is a maintenance against the vanishing time itself: "All else age, in time. Except. Some are without" (Cha, *Dictée* 38).

Spivak's call for the abuse of enlightenment from below (*Thinking* 3), her "field works of a wild anthropologist" (*A Critique* 620), and her refusal to work for information retrieval explain *Dictée*'s resistance to translate, represent, and smooth over the fragmentary narratives. However, Spivak's mythicizing of the Earth and soil as mother ("Conversation" 615; *Death* 94) to preserve this mother from the "foreign fertilizer" and her evocation of planetarity, paranationality, pre-capital culture, and alterity-directedness as opposed to globality makes her unwittingly champion the Caliban end of the debate in order to make common cause with the aborigines and tribes. She accuses the "woman of the diaspora" of "escaping from the failure of decolonization at home and abroad (*A Critique* 400-1). Spahr also argues that *Dictée* is not a postcolonial text because "the narrator, like Cha, escapes Colonialism thorough immigration" (125).

In contrast to Spivak's learning from below, Derrida evokes learning from specters, from beyond the *non-contemporaneity with itself of the living present*, both in the sense of those who are not there, so absent, silenced, or exterminated, and also those who are not there yet, not born (Derrida, *Specters* xix). One is apprenticed only to the other, to death and "to come." No learning is possible without this "upkeep, the conversation, the company, or the companionship, in the commerce without commerce of ghost" (xviii). No speaking without first speaking to or giving voice to the ghost, hence the unavoidable "politics of memory, of inheritance, and of generations" (xix). This is the only safeguard, Derrida warns, against the "the absolute evil," of the exorcised and the fully present life, "the one that does not know death and does not want to hear about it" (175). For Derrida, aphasia is rooted in our attempts to exorcize the spirit of the dead. Beginning from the daguerreotype image of the Egyptian ruins, with which *Dictée* opens its array of "punctive" photographs that evoke traumatic memories and unbearable loss (Barthes 72), Cha's text is haunted by specters of the casualties of colonial atrocities and the world wars, by the wandering Korean exiles in Manchuria and elsewhere, and by the ghostly woman who un-frames herself from the wifely regalia before she disappears inside the mist (Cha, *Dictée* 114).



Cha's Disease, who allows others, in place of herself (3), who relays, recites, and delivers herself and others, who can dispel the spell cast upon time by letting the sound enter from without (123), and thereby revives the dead words, dead tongues, and like Derrida's Marx, who was and is never, nowhere received, who "remains an immigrant, a sacred, clandestine immigrant" living in the "time out of joint" and doing "a new thinking of borders," is a new experience of learning "from between the earth and sky" (Derrida, *Specters* 174):

*Dead words. Dead tongues. From disuse. Buried in Time's memory. Unemployed. Unspoken. History. Past. Let the one who is disease, one who is mother, who waits nine days and nine nights be found. Restore memory. Let the one who is disease, one who is daughter restore spring with her each appearance from beneath the earth. (Cha, Dictée 133)*

With this juxtaposition of learning from below and from the space in-between, of subalterns and specters appears a pattern of justice Derrida and Spivak seek and the "name" in which they evoke it. It also raises the question of whom history belongs to — the native informant or the immigrants, deportees, and exiles. Where should we look for the sources of learning — down into the chthonic world of the native, who due to the global grid of financing and homeworking is being exploited into slow decay and vegetation (Spivak, "Ghostwriting" 71), or the world of specters, the armies of ghosts, the immense tide of deportees searching for their names (Derrida, *Truth* 329)?

### Home, Hospitality, and (inoperative) Community

This learning from "between the sky and earth," and giving voice to the aphasic or asphyxiated ghosts continue into Derrida's works like *Of Hospitality*, where he makes the final "resting place" of the dead the measure of all human journeys (89). For him displaced, deported, rootless exiles and nomads, all share nostalgia to return, almost a Freudian compulsion to restore the initial stages of human life (Freud 43), yet they use their mother tongue as their prosthetic homeland. "Wouldn't this mother tongue," asks Derrida, "be a sort of second skin you wear on yourself, a mobile home? But also an immobile home since it moves about with us?" (89). The last resting place of the family for him not only defines the family, but also functions as the key habitation for defining home, the city or even the whole country where relatives, parents and ancestors are at rest. If the injunction and identity come from the land of the dead, and the learning from beyond is impossible without their visitations, apparitions or return, the question is, what happens to them whose "dead" never return, or even if they do, the living cannot hold conversation or keep company with them, for they have lost the tongue they shared with the dead. They are worlds apart in such a way that these two "immigrants," one in the First World like the narrator of "Calliope Epic Poetry" in *Dictée*, and the other in the final world, like the narrator's mother's parents, know not each other. The Korean drafted workers buried alive in Japanese coal mines, the demonstrating students shot down on the roadside, the father and mother dying in Manchuria with a regret that they could not see their home purged or die in free Korea, speak to this state of permanent disconnect between home and exile, and the living and the dead.

An extreme form of severance and abandonment is at work, which eventually returns these figures and specters that are carefully resurrected in Cha, Spivak and Derrida back to their uncanny strangeness. In spite of Derrida's hospitable move and his attempts at determining their socio-economic and cultural relations on the basis of one's links with the "restful" dead and mobile language, the narrator's Mother on her return to Korea finds that she has returned to an uncanny place, familiar, yet so strange — "You return yet you are not one of them [even though] you understand what they are saying" (56). The perfect contiguity expressed in Derrida is foreign to *Dictée's* world of the displaced and the infantilized, where the graves are left open, the specters, far from being at rest, are loose, and the dead are running amuck all over the world, along the borders, in exile, custom offices, and street demonstrations and even in the quietude of the private rooms.

### “neither one thing nor the other”

The juxtaposition of native informant v. exile; specters v. subalterns; and home v. location at once structures and fails to determine the world of Cha's *Dictée* and its complex moves between the world of the vegetating bodies, disused tongues, and the fantasmatic relation of the exiles to the lost home. The diseuse, who knows what is “to come”, is also the one who can redeem the past from complete disuse. She is at once the mother above and the daughter that comes from below with the Spring (Cha, *Dictée* 133). Along with evoking planetarity and the alterity of the mother Earth, *Dictée* makes Earth porous in enunciation (160). The diluted myth of Princess Pali (Shih 157) that appears in the final section of the text seems to effect cure but is immediately frustrated by the reversal where the small girl with medicine in nine packets asks her mother to lift her up from the dark (Cha, *Dictée* 179), as if the text had come full circle and the girl had become the coal miner calling his mother for help. Instead of promising home and health, it leaves both mother and daughter suspended in the series of concentric circles (175), a state of perpetual exile and refuge without destination (80), or a state of being neither one thing nor the other (20). As a result of which the diseuse is left to “[b]ared noise, groan, bits torn from words,” (3). In this state of hybridity, the state of being divided, as Agamben would say, between the city and the forest, between the beast and the man, between the lupization of man and the humanization of the wolf (Agamben 105–6), she is bound to repeat the unrelenting yet forever incomplete “sentence of the exile,” while the black crows continue to mourn for her (Cha, *Dictée* 53).

Marshall University, West Virginia, USA

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# Transglobal Fiction: Diasporic Poetics of Resistance in Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* (1977) and Marilene Felinto's *As Mulheres de Tijucopapo* (1981)

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HAPSATOU WANE

**Abstract:** This article explores the theme of diasporic identities in two postcolonial literary works, *A Question of Power* by Bessie Head and *The Women of Tijucopapo* by Marilene Felinto. Through a comparative analysis, I examine how Elizabeth's detour into madness in the village of Motabeng and Risia's journey to the historical space of Tijucopapo become transformative points of entanglement. These "transglobal" sites foster relational diasporic identities and defy the constraints of national, transnational local, and global affiliations. The article reveals how both *A Question of Power* and *The Women of Tijucopapo* exemplify the interplay between local, global and national, and transnational dynamics, offering insights into the construction of postcolonial diasporic identities and their connections to transglobal points of entanglement with a particular focus on feminist diasporic studies.

**Keywords:** transglobal, detour, diaspora, feminism

## Theoretical Detours: Gestures of Relation

Wouldn't it be presumptuous to locate Bessie Head and Marilene Felinto's work within the national literary traditions of Botswana and Brazil based solely on their epigraphs? How do we engage with writers who frame their identities beyond traditional categories? These epigraphs could easily be interpreted as the writers' desire to resist conventional labels assigned by literary critics, illustrating their yearning for universality and freedom. A closer examination of their autobiographical fictions, *A Question of Power* and *The Women of Tijucopapo*, sheds light on how and why Head and Felinto defy labeling altogether. By examining these autobiographical fictions together, we can intervene in feminist theories of diaspora from the perspectives of disidentified writers.

Drawing on the work of Kim Butler, I approach diaspora as "a framework for the study of a specific process of community formation" (Butler 2001, 194). In "Defining Diaspora, Refining a Discourse," Butler highlights how this approach clarifies labels and types of diasporas. Her main objective is to establish a strong basis for the comparative study of diasporas. She identifies four dimensions for studying single diasporas, which allow for comparison: the reasons and conditions of relocation, the relationships with the homeland, the relationships with the hostlands, and the interrelationships within the diasporic group (Butler 2001, 209). While my analysis of diasporization in *A Question of Power* and *The Women of Tijucopapo* stems from a comparative approach to studying their single diasporas, it departs from Butler's methodology as her dimensions are centered on homelands, hostlands, and the diaspora itself.

Published in 1974, *A Question of Power* follows Elizabeth's physical and mental journey, leading her to a permanent condition of unstable statelessness. Elizabeth leaves Apartheid South Africa and migrates to Botswana with her son, paralleling the historical mass influx of South African refugees to Botswana in the 1960s. As Elizabeth looks forward to a new beginning in Botswana, she experiences

a mental breakdown manifested through male and female hallucinatory figures. She soon realizes that her identity is a question of power.

Based on Butler's diasporan model, Elizabeth would be classified within a nation-based diaspora. While I acknowledge the validity of this interpretation, I argue that to make Elizabeth's diaspora comparable to others, it is important to dislocate her model of diaspora from the paradigm of hostlands, homelands, and diaspora itself. I aim to demonstrate that Elizabeth asserts her agency in her diasporic identity formation beyond metaphysical borders. For this reason, I will investigate which metaphors for diaspora offer new possibilities in comparing multiple single diasporas. These metaphors are particularly important as they allow us to engage in a conversation between *A Question of Power* and *The Women of Tijuapapo*.

Published in 1982 under the Brazilian Portuguese title *As Mulheres de Tijuapapo*, this epistolary fictional autobiography portrays Rísia, a mestiça with indigenous and black ancestry, who travels from São Paulo to the Nordeste. Her personal journey to Tijuapapo, her mother's birthplace, reverses the trajectory of the historical Brazilian Northeastern exodus during Brazilian industrialization in the 1960s. Rísia travels for nine months, yearning for a rebirth as she encounters the Brazilian mythical figures of the women of Tijuapapo. *A Question of Power* and *The Women of Tijuapapo* are both narratives of multifaceted physical and metaphysical migrations.

Given Head and Felinto's lived experiences, it is tempting to engage with their own diasporicity. However, this article focuses on how their protagonists, Elizabeth in *A Question of Power* and Rísia in *The Women of Tijuapapo*, elucidate possibilities for alternative diasporic frameworks of being and modes of belonging. I argue that reading *A Question of Power* and *The Women of Tijuapapo* through the prism of Glissant's concept of detour contributes to the formation of what I call "transglocal diasporas." This article is a response to Yogita Goyal's urgent call in "We Need New Diasporas." While Goyal addresses latest trends of African immigration to the US in her urgent call for new diasporas, I contend that the need for new diasporas also involves other migrant trajectories not centered around a redefinition of blackness.

Both *A Question of Power* and *The Women of Tijuapapo* feature migrants whose journeys are inscribed within national mass migrations. Building on Goyal's work, I use Glissant's detour as an alternative to Paul Gilroy's Black Atlantic, which centers blackness in the Americas and Europe. As I invite Edouard Glissant into these conversations, I aim to demonstrate how a comparative approach to *A Question of Power* and *The Women of Tijuapapo* illustrates the broadening process of intersectional diasporic visions of subjectivities. Detour, as an analytical tool, situates Bessie Head, Marilene Felinto, and Edouard Glissant in a process of transglocal diasporization, fashioning a relational, uncentered, and multidirectional approach to feminist diasporic theories and comparative literature.

### **Wandering Subjects: Gestures of Unbelonging in *A Question of Power***

In *A Question of Power*, Elizabeth initially describes herself as "essentially a product of the slums and hovels of South Africa" (Head 1974, 20). By positioning herself at the margins of South African society, Elizabeth highlights that the forced dispersal of Black, Coloured, and Indian South Africans into segregated areas during the Apartheid regime in South Africa is a relational rhizomatic component of her identity. Elizabeth's identification with the slums, which are singular peripheral locations, dismantles the fantasy of wholeness that permeates the rhetorical constructions of national identities. The singularity of the Apartheid regime oddly establishes a collective sense of national belonging based on exclusion and separatism. By confessing her marginal position, Elizabeth respects the terms of her filiation with South Africa by occupying the space nationally carved for her.

Yet, in South Africa, Elizabeth was "living with a permanent nervous tension" (Head 1974, 12). Her neurosis in South Africa is a "nervous condition introduced and maintained by the settler with [her] consent" (Fanon 1961, iv) I borrow Jean-Paul Sartre's statement in Frantz Fanon's preface of *The Wretched of the Earth*. To cure that neurosis, Elizabeth takes an exit permit with "a never to



return clause" (Head 1974, 12) as an ultimate resort. Such an act can be interpreted as a desperate search for asylum or an attempt at being included in a new national equilibrium. Her neurosis then is read in direct relation to her classification as a coloured individual within the South African societal organization.

In her native country, Elizabeth has always felt trapped within the confines of a racial group: "In South Africa, she had been rigidly classified Coloured. There was no escape from it to the simple joy of being a human being with a personality. There wasn't any escape like that for anyone in South Africa" (p. 41). According to the 'Population Registration Act of 1950,' "a Coloured person means a person who is not white or a native" (Nixon 1950, 108). Thus, Elizabeth's sense of national belonging is based on a segregationist compartmentalization disguised as filial ties between citizens and the mother country. Elizabeth refuses to belong to the Coloured community to come to terms with a homogenized national identity.

The national itinerary imposed on Elizabeth as a Coloured person by the South African government starts with what was deemed as an "illicit carnal intercourse between a European and a non-European" (Apartheid's Immorality Amendment Act, 1950), which translates Elizabeth's racial identity as a corollary offense to the state. Elizabeth's mother is a white woman who had an affair with a "stable boy, who was native" (Head 1974, 9). Elizabeth is the visible and perpetual reminder of a crime committed outside the legal boundaries of the state. Her mother is put in a mental institution while her father just disappears altogether. This national narrative does not allow for Elizabeth's parents to survive beyond the illicit space carved by the South African state. Elizabeth's filial ties to her parents, although concretely inexistent from her standpoint, rigidly classify her as a Coloured person in South Africa.

For Elizabeth, the state has woven together a series of rejection stories as the child warfare committee fails to find her a home. When she finally was placed in a family like her, "part African, part English" (Head 1974, 8), Elizabeth shares an affinity with her foster-mother to whom she says, "she really belonged emotionally" (Head 1974, 9). Elizabeth understands her foster-mother was paid to take care of her. Her love for that woman does not cloud her understanding of the politics of identity at the intersection of race, class, and gender determining their relation.

Once again, Elizabeth was taken from her foster-mother's care and sent away to attend a mission school when the South African war began. Symbolically, this is where Elizabeth learned about her so-called roots. The principal of the mission school that Elizabeth attended revealed to then thirteen-year-old Elizabeth 'the original sin' that has marked her even before her birth and which is associated with her mother's "stigma of insanity" (Head 1974, 10). Elizabeth's story in this national landscape aims to reinforce the stigma of insanity she has to bear as a Coloured person. "In a country where people are not people" (Head 1974, 11) but "races" (Head 1974, 41), Elizabeth's life has been pre-designed to remain permanently in a position of exclusion.

Elizabeth's mental disorder connected to her national identity as a Coloured South African woman makes her occupy a position of exclusion that led to a physical and mental displacement. From her birth to her exile, Elizabeth has been confined in a racialized space with no escape. On the surface, her relocation to Botswana appears as an attempt to break free from the "prison garment" of the Coloured. However, the narrative of exile from South Africa to flee the Apartheid regime has been incorporated into contemporary nationalist accounts that classify Elizabeth as a South African refugee. In this context, it is tempting to assimilate Elizabeth's psychotic bouts with the nervous breakdowns that "a lot of refugees have" (Head 1974, 49). Her neurosis could then be easily assimilated into the common nervous condition shared by all South African refugees, with no distinction of race, class, and gender.

In Botswana, Elizabeth's life was between what she calls "dream perceptions" and "a waking reality" (Head 1974, 22). These 'dream perceptions' were manifested through hallucinatory episodes during which Elizabeth is tormented by three intangible figures: Sello, Dan, and Medusa. After a particularly climactic episode, the principal of the Motabeng Secondary School, an Afrikaner man



from South Africa, brought her to the hospital. He began to associate his experience as a refugee with Elizabeth's: "I suffer, too, because I haven't a country and know what it's like" (p. 49). When touched by his sympathy, Elizabeth tried to explain to him the nature of her breakdowns, but he refused to listen. Eugene, the Afrikaner man, silenced Elizabeth's attempts at explaining the singularity of her mental disorder and only conceded one possible diagnostic to her condition: Eugene assumed that, similarly to all South Africans, Elizabeth was still traumatized by the racist system of Apartheid.

For Elizabeth, the experiences of South African refugees cannot be homogenous considering the racial inequalities that permeated South Africa during Apartheid. In other words, Elizabeth finds that there is a clear distinction between the nervous conditions of Coloured South African refugees and those of Afrikaner South African refugees. She then distances herself from narratives that would blend both very distinguishable experiences by weaving new connections with other oppressed South African groups, notably the homosexuals and the poor. By stating that as a Coloured woman, Elizabeth "could not help but identify with the weak, homosexual men" (p. 43), the connection between two different identity markers, one based on race and the other on sexuality, reveals the multiplicity of forms of domination to which Elizabeth, as a Coloured person, is subjected.

In this sense, Elizabeth's physical relocation to Botswana is still part of the national trajectory imposed on her as a Coloured person. Her impossible identification with neither the Batswana nor the Motswana, both dominant ethnic groups in Botswana, are the sequels of her father's absence in her life: "Definitely, as far as Botswana society was concerned, [Elizabeth] was an out-and-out outsider and would never be in on their things" (Head 1974, 20). Elizabeth cannot relate to the "tribal affairs" of Botswana because her tribal filiation is untraceable. Therefore, whereas in South Africa, Elizabeth's nativeness was concealed as a Coloured person, in Botswana, it is questioned by her disassociation with the "tribal Africans" (Head 1974, 154). This shows that Elizabeth still resists all conventional forms of classification, whether in South Africa or in Botswana.

Elizabeth does not develop a sense of national belonging to Botswana, as she self-identifies "a stateless person" in her host country (Head 1974, 11). Hence, Elizabeth's identity is not localizable in national or transnational contexts. To a certain extent, she exhibits the characteristics of a wandering subject as theorized by feminist diasporic theorist Sarah Cervenak. In *Wanderings: Philosophical Performances of Racial and Sexual Freedom*, Cervenak conceptualizes the wandering subject as a Black woman "who wants to be able to be nowhere, to exist in elsewhere outside the radars of those who desire to fix her somewhere" (Cervenak 2011, 107). Elizabeth's assertion of statelessness illustrates modes of resistance characterized by "renouncing the limits imposed on one's movement, living, and acting in excess of the moorings of someone else's desire" (Cervenak 2011, 145). Elizabeth's statelessness is one of the "terrains where bodies are no longer the grounds for others' becomings, others' vicious expressions of neo-imperial, homophobic, transphobic, racist, sexist, classist, and ableist desire" (Cervenak 2011, 172).

For Elizabeth, the principle of domination resides not only in the Apartheid regime but also in universal, rigid, and predetermined identity categories. Elizabeth uncovers the "principle of domination," concealed in all national construction of identity-defining classifications. Her mental exile is the ultimate gesture of unbelonging, defying any identity-defining categories. Elizabeth is not on a quest to belong to any national territory, narrative, or community. As a wandering subject, she makes and unmakes her own way (Cervenak 2011, 107). Her national and transnational trajectories are detours leading her to a point of entanglement where she can understand the nature of the domination in South Africa. Before tackling the significance and dimension of the point of entanglement in *A Question of Power*, let us turn to *The Women of Tijuapapo* and Rísia's gestures of unbelonging.

### Nomadic Subjects: Gestures of Unbelonging in *The Women of Tijuapapo*

Rísia's voyage is the reverse journey of many Brazilians who left their rural Northeastern region for the promises of urban São Paulo. *The Women of Tijuapapo* offers an original approach to

Brazilian internal migratory movements that occurred in the 1930s. These singular migrations were often at the heart of regionalist novels produced during the second phase of the modernist period of Brazilian literature. In reverse mode, the regional displacement is at the core of *The Women of Tijucopapo*, as Rísia at first seems to reclaim her identity as a Northeasterner by undertaking the journey of Northeastern migrants from Southern to Northern Brazil. I argue in this section that Rísia's reversal of a journey foundational to the formation of regional and national identities in Brazil is a gesture of unbelonging that illustrates Rísia's desire to be located outside territorially and ethnically defined spatial frameworks.

In the Brazilian racial landscape, Rísia is categorized as a *mestiça*. In *Race in Another America: The Significance of Skin Color in Brazil*, Edward Telles defines *mestiçagem* as "race mixture or miscegenation [...] that forms the foundational concept of Brazilian racial ideology. Race mixture represents a set of beliefs that Brazilians hold about race, including the belief that Brazilians have long mixed across racial lines, more so than in any other society, and that nonwhites are included in the Brazilian nation. Miscegenation has long been a defining metaphor of the Brazilian nation..." (Telles 2004, 3). Rísia descends from Indians and Blacks, "dark-skinned people," as she puts it. Her grandmother was a "Negress," and her grandfather was an "Indian."

Yet, Rísia does not celebrate her racial hybridity, challenging thus the conventional positive perspectives on Brazilian multiracial identity. Rísia interprets racial miscegenation as a mirage, a fantasy, an illusion, an unstable and fragile mirror reflection: "It was in Poti, a moon-town, where I was born and where I know that my grandfather was an Indian. Sometimes I look at myself in the mirror and I tell myself I come from Indians and blacks, dark-skinned people, I feel like a tree, I feel rooted, a manioc plant coming out of the ground. Then I remember that I am nothing" (Felinto 1994, 23-24). Rísia shows that the Eurocentric tree identification based on racial ancestry and lineage leads to emptiness, invisibility, and nothingness within Brazilian miscegenation.

While throughout her journey, Rísia defines diverse ways in which she is "nothing," she retraces her "nothingness" to the *Branqueamento*, the institutionalization of a racist immigration policy immediately following Brazil's abolition of slavery in 1888. White Europeans were encouraged to move to the country and whiten the face of Brazil and its culture. In the following passage, Rísia reminisces about how her grandmother's daughters were subjected to this whitening ideology and how they became "women so nothing": "Mama's last native link died out in the rays of the moon on the moonlit night when she was given away. Everything about mama is adopted and adoptive. My mother has no origins; in reality, my mother does not exist. I don't know if my mother ever was born" (Felinto 1994, 23). In Rísia's mnemonic travel, Poti represents the whitening space articulating the sterile feature of the racial notion of miscegenation. De facto, Brazilian miscegenation resulting from the *Branqueamento* erases all traces of origin for the *mestiço/as*. This illustrates the inadequacy of the model of root-identity that Edouard Glissant considers to be "an obsession with a single point of origin" (Glissant 1997, 16).

Rísia, therefore, is in search of another model of identity: Rísia "left [her] home and the city because [she] lost the beginning, the birth of her mother..." (Felinto 1994, 62) Rísia realizes that she cannot construct her identity based on a racial ancestry whitened by a racist ideology. Poti is a fragment of Rísia's reminiscences from which her memories depart. Recife specifically represents experiences of her childhood that "spread out into what [Rísia is] right up until now, into what [she will] always be" (Felinto 1994, 58). Describing her childhood as a space of anxieties, Rísia claims that her childhood shaped her existential anxieties in response to her precarious condition.

In terms of race, it is during an outing with her classmates to Manjopi that Rísia was faced for the first time with the notion of racial relations: in Manjopi, she had her first group experience (Felinto 1994, 58) and she learned how different she was (Felinto 1994, 59). Rísia realizes that her "hair wasn't as smooth as Libania's or Maisa's" and that she "was a scholarship student in a class of plump pink girls" (Felinto 1994, 59). Within the context of hair politics in identifying blackness, Rísia's under-

standing that her hair was coarse and kinky is a practice of belonging and the expression of her racial identity. Hair as a racial marker is deeply entrenched within a discourse of racial identification in the US and other parts of Latin America. Rísia's blackness thus is made visible through the texture of her hair. Coupled with her self-identification as "dark-skinned," the coils of Rísia's hair do not necessarily refer to blackness as constructed in other African diasporas.

Noting Rísia's mother's use of brilliantine to straighten her daughter's hair, it is important to mention that such a bodily performance relates to hair traditions in the Brazilian backlands. For example, the Cangadeiros, a group of northeastern social bandits led by Lampião, especially used brilliantine for its distinct odor that would allow them to mark their presence. Rísia's memories of her mother's hair practices weave together a black racial marker and an indigenous revolutionary act. At this point in the narration, the performance of Rísia's mother is read as another attempt at whitening her daughter. Such a reading is supported by Rísia's confession that she was winning swimming races in the River at Pedra Branca, a town that means "white stone." She compares her swimming achievements with her intimidation in front of "the perfect blueness of the swimming pool" in Manjopi (Felinto 1994, 59). Though she depreciates her skinny legs, Rísia suggests that her body is not ill-fitted to swim in the pool. Her feeling of unbelonging is more exacerbated by the economic inequalities between her family and her classmates: "On top of the rest, the girls were the daughters of rich sergeants. I was poor, and my mother was a believer" (Felinto 1994, 59).

In a Fanonian moment recalling the postcolonial scholar's emphasis on the racialization of inequalities, Rísia thinks about the relationship between her racial identity and her precarious economic condition as she states: "I am poor in father and in mother. Poor, poor" (Felinto 1994, 61). She later adds: "I walk on the bridge, and there are beggars lining my path. And robbers and prostitutes. So I don't identify with them. And yet I do. [...] They don't reflect, they are not a clear, limpid mirror. I see myself" (Felinto 1994, 61). In this passage, Rísia includes race in the social and economic stratification of precariousness. In doing so, she exemplifies the juxtaposition of racial, social, and economic difference. By identifying with the lumpenproletariat, she is also juxtaposing different scales of experience. Out of place within a Eurocentric family tree model, Rísia develops a sense of identification and belonging to the precarious communities of the downtrodden. Yet, by associating miscegenation with self-hatred from the onset of the novel, Rísia expresses her hatred of her mother. As a matrophobic protagonist, Rísia manifests the desire to reclaim a lineage different from her mother's.

Rísia's fractured identity does not fit in the superficial uniformity of any group, whether it is that of her family or her classmates'. Her atypical migratory journey does not create a location of unbelonging where she could identify with a specific group. As a nomadic subject, she redefines her identity as "nothing," which is a gesture of unbelonging that should not be misread as a blurring or a subversion of identity categories. This resonates with Paula Jordão's effective characterization of Rísia as a protagonist corresponding to what Rosi Braidotti defines as a nomadic subject: "she/he connects, circulates, moves on; s/he does not form identifications but keeps on coming back at regular intervals" (Braidotti 2006, 35).

According to Jordão, Rísia as a nomadic subject identity can be characterized as: "a play of multiple, fractured aspects of the self; it is relational, in that it requires a bond to the 'other'; it is retrospective, in that it is fixed through memories and recollections, in a genealogical process" (Braidotti 2006, 166). This is a gesture disrupting the discourse of identity constructing migratory subjectivities defined by points of origin.

By challenging the rigidity of identity markers and acknowledging their local and global singularities, Elizabeth in *A Question of Power* and Rísia in *The Women of Tijucopapo* interrogate conventional narratives of migration. As a metaphor for displacement, migration implies a movement "to specific places and definite reasons" (Boyce-Davies 37). Neither Elizabeth nor Rísia follows that model of migration in their narratives, considering their gestures of unbelonging and their search for the principle of domination rather than a single point of origin. For Elizabeth and Rísia,

neither Botswana nor Brazil is the mythical promised land that permeates discourses of diaspora. They both resist their inclusion in national historical narratives of travel by crossing, distorting, and eluding space, and time. They project themselves into intangible worlds, diverting the movements of national mass migration. Yet, those alternate movements are not completely detached from ‘reality’; they are the deformed, disoriented, and disorderly echoes of Elizabeth’s and Rísia’s diasporic lived experiences.

### Transglocal Diasporas: Sites of Entanglement

In *The Women of Tijucopapo* and *A Question of Power*, the protagonists, Rísia and Elizabeth, engage in routes leading to the construction of nomadic, wandering, and muddy points of entanglement, which establish what I call “transglocal diasporas” (Cervenak 145; 172). The concept of “transglocal space” represents a postcolonial point of entanglement, where the local and the global, the personal and the collective, the historical and the mythical, and the national and the transnational collide transversally (Cervenak 145; 172).

After examining both protagonists’ wandering and nomadic movements as practices of unbelonging, eschewing the regional, national, and transnational borders within which Rísia and Elizabeth were confined, it becomes evident that Tijucopapo in *The Women of Tijucopapo* and Motabeng in *A Question of Power* are transglocal points of entanglement revealing the multiplicity of border crossings forming Rísia and Elizabeth’s intersectional diasporic identities (Cervenak 107). Paralleling national mass migrations, the aim of Rísia and Elizabeth’s metaphorical travels is “to be reborn” as transglocal diasporic subjectivities (Cervenak 13).

### Tijucopapo: Muddy Entanglements

In *The Women of Tijucopapo*, Tijucopapo is initially introduced as Rísia’s motherland: “I can be reborn in Tijucopapo where my mama is born” (Felinto 1994, 13). Yet, as mentioned earlier, Rísia’s mother was said to be born in Poti. Rísia herself realizes her confusion as she states: “Sometimes I confuse the towns saying that it was in Poti that those women were given away like my mother were born. But what happens is that everything is so moonshine that all of a sudden I become moonstruck” (Felinto 1994, 23). The moon in this sentence symbolizes the Branqueamento policies that whitened the black and indigenous populations. The confusion is, therefore, a direct consequence of the implementation of racist ideologies.

Due to the ‘whitening’ of Brazilian national identities, Tijucopapo as a historical space has been erased from the collective memory of Brazil. Rísia unearths a silenced and unmapped past which she strives to translate into her contemporary world. Looking for ways of improving this speech impediment she caught in São Paulo (Felinto 1994, 78), Rísia embarks on a nine-month journey to Tijucopapo. The choice of Tijucopapo as a camouflaged destination point is not fortuitous. Besides the fact that it might or might not be the birthplace of Rísia’s mother, Tijucopapo is “the space of insurrection” (Felinto 1994, 105) where Brazilian women fought back against the Dutch army in the 17th century. Inscribed within the colonial past of Brazil, Tijucopapo witnesses the insurrection of Brazilian women against Dutch invaders in Pernambuco. As she weaves the personal memory of her mother with historical figures of resistance such as the women of Tijucopapo, Rísia reinvents for herself a glorious past when women fought against colonial oppression, highlighting its international characteristics. The revolt of these Northeastern Brazilian women is even more interesting as the women of Tijucopapo defeated the Dutch army with weapons including cooking pots.

There is no mention of those specific historical events in Rísia’s description of the women of Tijucopapo besides their warrior attributes:

“Where those women came from, my heritage, women made of the substance of the tijuco, thick-haired, dragging on their horses’ manes, straddling the beasts bareback, amazons. Once upon a night,

upon a time, my mother was born in the heart of a swamp. In a mud plain. Women like my mother bear the mark of certain women who take off to face the world straddling their horses, amazons defending themselves no one knows exactly from what, except, as we know love. They are amazons on horseback coming to make their mark on the tijucopapo, where everything's a mire. The women of Tijucopapo: horseshoes. The women of Tijucopapo: it's as if so little remains of everything; and it's as if so much remains when it turns itself into a heritage. The women of Tijucopapo: they are me with my mark of mud, I who emerged, a mud creature, a worm, where the beach meets the mud. The women of Tijucopapo: yes. I'm coming. I'm slippery" (Felinto 1994, 46).

In this passage, Rísia clearly articulates her identification with the women of Tijucopapo, colliding personal and collective memories. Tijucopapo can be read as a "*lieu de mémoire*" (Nora 1989) in which Rísia's memories gestate a muddle of historical moments, as demonstrated by Paula Jordão: "As a reminder of the heroines who fought the Dutch invaders in Pernambuco in the seventeenth century, Tijucopapo is not just an element of Rísia's symbolic reality but is also part of Brazilian reality and (mythical) history. Moreover, by passing on her recollection of that (mythical) place to other generations, Rísia fulfills the task attributed to the *lieux de mémoire* – the enrichment of its meaning to a community, and in this particular case, to (a part of) the Brazilian Northeastern community.

Finally, by reviving events that are part of a forgotten history in which women played an essential role, Rísia broaches another aspect of Tijucopapo as a *lieu de mémoire*, namely the making of another history or of a renewed history that belongs to the legacy of gender of the Brazilian Nordeste" (Jordão 2010). I would add that designating Tijucopapo as *lieu de mémoire* still confines the women of Tijucopapo within national histories. Read as a transglobal site of entanglement, Tijucopapo puts in the same space local and global figures of women's resistance movements. To associate the women of Tijucopapo with the Greek Amazons re-locates Rísia's personal history on a global scale.

With the "unpredictable proliferation of its ramifications" (Nora 1989, 19), Rísia reconnects "scraps of memories with contemporary historical moments: "before that my mother had been born. And it had happened in Tijucopapo. It was 1935, and I can't imagine how things might have been, how one could have been, how one could be born. How could one have been in 1935?" (Felinto 1994, 7). By setting her mother's date of birth in 1935, Rísia relates her mother to the Vargas government, as the first failed communist coup in Brazil occurred in 1935. Bearing in mind the passive nature of Rísia's mother, such a connection is plausible since the coup failed. However, 1935 also records the peasant revolts in the Northeast led by the Cangadeiros meaning 'those who can't adapt' in Brazilian Portuguese.

Rísia's trajectory traces diasporic lines embedded in different forms of resistance. After unveiling the principle of domination in Tijucopapo, Rísia sets out to engage in different movements of resistance, ranging from social banditry to women warriors in her contemporary time. By recording the stories of battles for a just cause, Rísia liberates herself from the nationalist narrative of migration. Rísia now belongs to a new race that relays, rallies, and relates to the women of Tijucopapo, the women of Poti, the Amazons, and the Cangadeiras. Along the migratory route, she manages to identify the power structures that have excluded her: the nation, the patriarchy, and white supremacy.

Another feature of Tijucopapo encompasses Rísia's racial identity, as Tijucopapo means "black mud clay" in Tupi-Guarani. Tijucopapo is "where the beach meets the mud, where the beach turns into mud" (Felinto 1994, 45). As a *mestiça*, Rísia's identification with blackness has been determined by filial ties to her grandmother. However, the existence of her grandmother has been whitened in Poti, leading to invisibility. Rísia embraces her diasporic identity with the contact between Africans and the indigenous lands of Brazil. She does not link diasporicity to a specific environment or a territorially defined identity.

For her, Africa is a detour that leads to Tijucopapo, the diasporic point of entanglement where Rísia becomes connected to multiple histories and multiple spatial structures. Her diasporic identity is neither metaphorically nor physically territorially determined. The transglobal dimension of her diasporic



identity addresses the muddiness of Rísia. Her slipperiness translates in Glissant's world as opacity, which is "the demand of the right to not be understood" (Britton 1999, 19). To a certain extent, Rísia survives in a world that has no words to identify her as belonging to a specific community.

### **Motabeng: Sandy Entanglements**

Like Rísia, Elizabeth demands the right to not be understood by shaping an identity "too funny for words" (Head 1974, 41) in connection to hallucinatory intangible figures: Sello, Dan, and Medusa. For Elizabeth, Sello and his reincarnations represent "the prophet of mankind" who incidentally happens to be an African with many reincarnations and vesture garments" (Head 1974, 25). Dan Molomo is the "epitome of the African male" (Head 1974, 137). Both Dan and Sello are local black people in Motabeng that Elizabeth barely knows and projects in her hallucinations. Her nervous breakdowns are described as follows: "the mentally, the normal and the abnormal blended completely in Elizabeth's mind" (Head 1974, 8). While the normal is associated with the local in Elizabeth's 'waking reality,' "her journeys into hell" go beyond the rural environment of Motabeng and extend to what can be easily misinterpreted as the universal.

Sello and Dan take on universal disguises of dominant power structures preying on "soft-shuffling, loose-knitting personalities" (Head 1974, 4). For example, Sello is appointed a religious personality which locates him in the spiritual frameworks of Hinduism, Buddhism, Ancient Egyptian pantheist religion, and the Greek pantheon. Portrayed as a local man who embodies the multiplicity of divine figures, Sello is incidentally African, which suggests that anyone can claim the attributes of God. Sello's transformation from a local man into supreme divine figures originated in Asia (Hinduism/Buddha), Africa (Egyptian gods), and Europe (Greek gods), and his identification with epic heroes including Rama (Head 1974, 8) and Caligula (Head 1973: 38) shows that at the transglobal scale, while different, religion and national epic narratives conceal a similar institutional system of domination.

Elizabeth's mental condition is a detour that she takes to uncover the principle of domination. Tormented by nightmarish figures like Medusa, Elizabeth shows how mythologies, creation stories, and religion have taken part in labeling people according to fixed, rigid identity categories. By juxtaposing multiple histories and temporalities in her hallucinatory world, Elizabeth exposes the real "insanity" in adopting pseudo-universal concepts such as race, gender, class, ethnicity, and nationality. It is by trying to belong to specific groups through national or local filiation that Elizabeth fails to connect with Motabeng.

When she arrived in Motabeng, Elizabeth was amazed at how different life in South Africa and Botswana is: "It was so totally new, so inconceivable; the extreme opposite of 'Hey, Kaffir, get out of the way,' the sort of greeting one usually was given in South Africa" (Head 1974, 14). She settled in the central part of the village and had a sense of home in the village through routine interactions with the people. Then, "her life began to pitch over from an even keel, and it remained from then onwards at a pitched-over angle" (Head 1974, 15). This disequilibrium seemingly detached Elizabeth from reality and illustrated her repeated interactions with hallucinatory figures. It is only three months after her arrival in Motabeng that Elizabeth started to have these visions, blurring all forms of dividing lines.

As Elizabeth confesses that "she was not given to 'seeing' things. The world had always been two-dimensional, flat and straight with things she could see and feel" (Head 1974, 22), it almost seems like when she realized that Botswana was not that different from South Africa in terms of societal compartmentalization, Elizabeth created a world in parallel where all boundaries would be blurred. Her hallucinations are ways to cope with her profound sense of unbelonging to realities determined by classifications. Her delirious interactions with Sello, Dan, and Medusa form "an entanglement of negativities accepted as such, in which it is not possible to make a clear-cut distinction between active and passive, choice and constraint, or even victory or defeat" (Britton 1995, 27). Elizabeth's madness is a form of detour, with Motabeng as the transglobal point of entanglement.



“Motabeng means the place of sand. It was a village remotely inland, perched on the edge of the Kalahari Desert. The only reason for people’s settlement there was a good supply of underground water. It took a stranger some time to fall in love with its harsh outlines and stark, black trees” (Head 1974, 13). This description locates Motabeng in relation to the Kalahari Desert, a transnational space. From the onset, Motabeng is identified in local (village), national (Botswana), and transnational (Kalahari Desert) terms. The ordinariness of life in Motabeng is starkly at odds with Elizabeth’s torment. It is only when she joins the market gardening project that Elizabeth feels a sense of belonging to the land.

Motabeng becomes a site of entanglements defined by “voluntary labor” (Head 1974, 207), “friendliness” (Head 1974, 128), and “solid respect of work partnership” (Head 1974, 207). With multiple factors of interaction beyond the conventional identity markers, international and local communities could develop gestures of belonging, such as gardening, to settle harmoniously in Motabeng. The garden project not only provides food to both communities, but it is also a space of belonging in which people from foreign backgrounds, including English volunteers and Danish exiles, come to exchange their agricultural and commercial skills. The strength of the “seedlings” arises from the multiple and diverse methods of metaphoric and agricultural transplantation.

Transplanted in Motabeng, Elizabeth “like the Cape gooseberry, settled down and became part of the village life in Motabeng” (Head 1974, 163). Elizabeth’s process of diasporization is not based on the common sufferings of people relocated in Motabeng. It is related to voluntary cooperative labor. A significant detail is the diversity of the members of the cooperative, not only in terms of nationalities but also in terms of race, gender, and class. Elizabeth’s unlikely friendships with Tom, the American Peace Corps volunteer, Kenosi, the Botswana woman, Eugene, the Afrikaner South African refugee, balance her everyday life in Motabeng when she is not having her psychotic bouts. While I interpret Elizabeth’s neurosis as a form of detour, I contend that Motabeng is a transglocal point of entanglement where Elizabeth manages to experience the relational identity politics impossible to assume in South Africa.

Eventually, this section illustrates how the construction of postcolonial diasporic identities is connected to transglocal points of entanglements in Head’s *A Question of Power* and Felinto’s *The Women of Tijucoapapo*. Taken together, Tijucoapapo and Motabeng create a series of transglocal points of entanglements where Elizabeth and Rísia cultivate a ‘poetics of solidarity in diversity’ (Glissant 1989, 144). Both Elizabeth and Rísia live globality to combat the inequities of globalization. Indeed, while Elizabeth participates in sustainable local agriculture supported by global agricultural techniques, Rísia rewrites her own story with a happy ending without needing to translate it into English. When Rísia sets out on her journey from the city to Tijucoapapo, she expresses the desire to translate the letter she is writing to her mother into English. She wants her letter to have a happy ending, in comparison to Hollywood films. Eventually, she dictates the letter to Lampião, the Brazilian Northeastern folk hero, appropriating Lampião’s revolutionary language rather than English or Portuguese. Elizabeth and Rísia’s journeys are practices of detour that led them to Tijucoapapo and Motabeng, where they not only resist conventional identity politics but also identify globalization as one of the principles of domination they have been subjugated to.

### Theoretical Detours: Gestures of Transglocality

Overall, both Tijucoapapo and Motabeng create transglocal points of entanglement where Rísia and Elizabeth cultivate relational identity politics that resist conventional classification and address the inequities of globalization (Cervenak 144; 139). Through their journeys, Rísia and Elizabeth challenge the principles of domination that have subjugated them, ultimately embracing a transglocal diasporic identity that transcends traditional boundaries (Cervenak 139).

Fruitful theoretical conversations between feminist diasporic concepts such as Carole Boyce-Davies’s migratory subjectivities, Rosi Braidotti’s nomadic subject, and Sarah Cervenak’s wander-

ing and diasporic theoretical frameworks including Glissant's detour offer new avenues to explore how to engage with opaque subjectivities in the context of migration (Goyal, 2016). Responding to Yogita Goyal's call for new diasporas (Goyal, 2016), I mapped an alternative to spatial diaspora such as Robin Cohen's global diasporas (Cohen, 1997) and Lindsey Moore's global diasporas (Moore, 2010).

Transglobal fictions are postcolonial narratives of detour, embracing multiple forms of diasporization. After examining both protagonists' wandering and nomadic movements as practices of unbelonging, rejecting the regional, national, and transnational borders within which Rísia and Elizabeth were confined (Felinto, 1998; Head, 1973), Tijucoapapo in *The Women of Tijucoapapo* and Morabeng in *A Question of Power* are transglobal points of entanglement that reveal the multiplicity of border crossings forming Rísia and Elizabeth's multilayered diasporic identities. The aim of Rísia and Elizabeth's metaphorical travels, paralleling national mass migrations, is "to be reborn" as transglobal migratory subjectivities (Felinto, 1998, 13; Head, 1974).

Elizabeth and Rísia engage in gestures of unbelonging by diverting the diasporic routes framed within their corresponding national migration narratives. Then, they assert their agency by relinking and relaying their identities with transglobal points of entanglement where personal and collective, national, and transnational, local, and global histories collide transversally. These points of entanglement, I argue, are spaces of resistance and survival necessary for Elizabeth and Rísia to change their ways of conceiving, living, and reacting to routes leading to the construction of transversal, wandering, and muddy points of entanglement that formulate transglobal diasporas. The transglobal space is a postcolonial point of entanglement where the local and the global, the personal and the collective, the historical and the mythical, and the national and the transnational collide transversally.

Georgia Southern University, USA

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# Questions of Race in Leibniz's Logic

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JOSHUA M. HALL

This essay is part of larger project in which I attempt to show that Western formal logic, from its inception in Aristotle onward, has both been partially constituted by, and partially constitutive of, what has become known as racism. More specifically, (a) racist/quasi-racist/proto-racist political forces were part of the impetus for logic's attempt to classify the world into mutually exclusive, hierarchically-valued categories in the first place; and (b) these classifications, in turn, have been deployed throughout history to justify and empower racism/quasi-racism/proto-racism. In other words, (a) an important part of the chaos and messiness that so troubles logic has been the natural bio-cultural diversity of human beings as described by concepts such as race and ethnicity; and (b) once these concepts were historically in place, taken for granted, buttressed with pseudo-science, and had their origins forgotten, they became tools for the oppression of diverse human groups.

The central thesis of this essay is that close readings of a variety of Leibniz's writings (including several essays and one letter) will reveal a pattern of mutual dependency and creation in regard to logic and racism in Leibniz. My conclusion will be that there is a meaningful connection between logic and racism (or at least between logic and politics in general) in Leibniz such that one should be skeptical of his logic's claim to offer transparent and neutral descriptions of the world as well as imperatives for action. Put differently, I want to ask the following specific question: how do Leibniz's own racially-informed political goals, along with the emergence of race-centric European colonialism, both invest and disguise themselves within Leibniz's mathematizing of logic?

Before going any further, it is important that I address what exactly I mean by the terms "race" and "racism." Coming from a generally postmodern philosophical framework, and understanding (at least social) reality as being socially constructed, I do not personally recognize the concept "race" as any more metaphysically real than the concepts "man," or "justice," or for that matter even the concept of "reality" itself. However, I also do not consider the concept of "race" to be any *less* real than "man," "justice" or "reality." Consequently, it makes no difference to me or this project whether Leibniz is most "accurately" described as a "racist," or a "quasi-racist," or perhaps instead a "proto-racist." What matters to me, rather, is that I believe I have identified a pattern of thinking, a template for carving up the world linguistically and conceptually that goes all the way from Aristotle to contemporary racism.

I would have no objections if the reader wishes to further carve up this prejudicial or discriminatory thinking into, for example, "proto-racism" in Aristotle, "quasi-racism" in the medievals, and then "racism" proper in Leibniz and Frege. Nor, of course, would I object to the reader following my own, idiosyncratic, broader use of the term "racism," which includes all these varieties of prejudicial or discriminatory thinking. In any event, I do not believe that my arguments, or their persuasive force, should be informed in the least by this question of labels. Nevertheless, in case the reader would prefer a formal definition of the terms, I offer the following. Race, as I will use it throughout this essay, means a group of people defined historically by some form(s) of bio-cultural characteristics. By racism, then, I will mean prejudicial or discriminatory treatment (in thought, feeling, word and/or action) in regards to such bio-culturally historically defined groups and their members.

Leibniz lived during the first historical era in regards to which at least some philosophers are willing to acknowledge racism exists. The historical events required for this begrudging acknowledgment, unfortunately, were nothing less than the near-genocide of the people inhabiting almost a quarter of the globe (North America) and the enslavement of those living on another quarter (South America). The relationship of these events, specifically the Spanish conquest of the Western hemisphere, to Aristotle's theory of natural slavery is the subject of a little-read 1959 historical study by Lewis Hanke. It is through a discussion of this book, ultimately, that I will transition to a discussion of the central philosopher in this essay, Gottfried Leibniz.

### I. Hanke on Leibniz's sociopolitical context

*Aristotle and the American Indians: A Study in Race Prejudice in the Modern World* tells its story (on a model increasingly popular today, as evidenced by nonfiction studies such as *Wittgenstein's Poker* and *Rousseau's Dog*) almost entirely through the lens of one brief historical encounter between two public intellectuals. In this case, that encounter is a debate in 1550 between the Spanish Dominican "Apostle to the American Indians," Bartolomé de Las Casas, and the reigning Aristotle scholar of his day, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda. And the central feature of that debate, for Hanke, is the latter's explicit use of Aristotle's theory of natural slavery to justify pre-missionary warfare against the Native Americans.

Hanke's "Introduction" begins by repeating a version of the dogma that my larger project observes is repeatedly expressed by Aristotelian scholars. "Generally speaking," Hanke claims, "there was no true racial prejudice before the fifteenth century, for mankind was divided not so much into antagonistic races as into 'Christians and infidels'" (ix). At least Hanke uses here the weaker formulation, "not so much," which seems appropriate given the fact that the religious division between Christians and (especially) Muslims maps very closely onto the racial/ethnic division between Caucasians and Arabs. I believe that my later analyses of Leibniz will shed light on this issue.

In chapter one, Hanke states in simple terms the relationship he finds between Aristotle and late medieval/early modern thought. "Aristotle's authority remained so strong among Christian thinkers that some eminent Spaniards did not hesitate to apply his doctrine of natural slavery to the Indians" (1). But Aristotle was not, Hanke adds, the only major influence on Spanish conceptions of the Western hemisphere. Medieval influences were also critical. "The Spaniards who actually saw America not only became tremendously excited and stimulated but they tended to look at the New World through medieval spectacles," particularly "during the early years of the discovery and conquest" (3). More specifically, the Europeans were "expecting to encounter many kinds of mythical beings and monsters depicted in medieval literature" (3).

To take one example, Augustine, "in his *City of God*," Hanke writes, "had a whole chapter on 'Whether the descendants of Adam or the sons of Noah produced monstrous races of men'" (3-4). The existence of "wild men," too, according to Hanke, "had captured popular imagination during the Middle Ages" (4). On a more sinister note, "The Devil himself was to be found, some believed, on a certain island in the Caribbean Sea," which in light of the later slave revolution that took place on the island nation of Haiti would probably have to be Hispaniola (5).

Unfortunately for the indigenous peoples of the Americas, opinions soon changed, in a way that prefigures Leibniz's part in my larger narrative. "The popular image, in the first feverish months, of a terrestrial paradise was soon succeeded by that of a hostile continent peopled with armed warriors rushing out" in order to "resist the advances of the Spanish soldiers and the missionary efforts of their companion friars" (6). Here, then, was one important justification for the violence, enslavement and even genocide perpetrated against of the American Indians: some of them refused to convert to Christianity, and some of those non-converters resisted with violence.

In the fateful year of 1492, not only did Columbus set out for his encounter with the American continents and peoples, but "Granada, the last of the Moorish kingdoms, fell to the Catholic Kings Ferdinand and Isabella," and also "the Jews were expelled" from Spain (8). In other words, three large

and dramatic race-events happened all in one year, two of which involved the racial purification of Spain from Jews and Arabs, and one of which involved the precursor to the most widespread racial genocide and assimilation in human history. And as if that were not enough, there was also one important, albeit much smaller, race-related event in that year. Isabella, Hanke tells us,

bluntly asked the scholar Antonio de Nebrija, as he presented to her his Spanish *Gramática*, the first grammar of a European modern language ever written: "What is it for?", and the Bishop of Avila, speaking on behalf of the scholar, replied: "Your Majesty, language is the perfect instrument of empire" (8).

Note the remarkable, apparent coincidence. The political expulsion of the Moors, the racial banishing of the Jewish people, and the writing of the first ever modern European grammar, all in the same year. And grammar and logic are significantly overlapping concepts, as suggested in part by the OED. One definition there of "logical" is "That follows as a reasonable inference or natural consequence; that is in accordance with the 'logic' of events, of human character." In this way, the metaphorical meaning of logic, namely the order or structure of a discourse, is incorporated into the literal definition of its adjective. Similarly, one of the meanings of "grammar" there is "The fundamental principles or rules of an art or science." At this level then, logic and grammar are nearly identical, in that they are the ordering rules of a discourse or science. It is in this sense that I suggested to my own General Logic students that logic can be understood as the form or language of thought. Put in the language of the current comparison, insofar as grammar is the form of language, the ways it structures how expression and thought take place within it, then logic is also the grammar of thought.

If this is true, then the first modern European grammar was also in a sense the first modern European logic, and what occurred in 1492 was the creation and/or formalization not only of a grammar, but also a logic, in order to conquer and subjugate entire nations. In that way, logic not only *is*, but is *self-consciously developed and presented as*, a weapon of war. Abelard's combative vision lives on. The Spanish did not depend absolutely on the new grammar in order to speak or write Spanish, because they were learning from native speakers in their own homes and families. But with regard to the anticipated new subjects of the Spanish empire, such an invention could conceivably be extremely effective, because adopting the conqueror's language is both critical to the assimilation of the conquered civilization *per se*, and also facilitates conversion to the conqueror's religion, which is perhaps equally important for such assimilation.

Just in case their own self-interest was an insufficient motivation and/or justification for conquest, the Spanish also received the active support of the Catholic Church, in the form of "the famous bulls of donation of 1493," which "specifically entrusted to the crown of Castile the Christianization of these lands" (8). Consequently, Hanke concludes, "we may be clear that the Spaniards had, logically, to determine Indian nature and capacity before they could legitimately pursue either conquest or Christianization" (9). The ambiguity of this sentence leaves it open for interpretation as to whether "logically" refers to the necessity to "determine Indian nature" and/or the method whereby that determination took place. In either case, what is at issue, given the quote above from Bishop Avila, is a double role for logic in the Spanish conquest. Logic was both (a) *qua* structure of the Spanish grammar, a weapon of conquest and (b) *qua* method of theoretical debate, a condition for the possibility of the use of that weapon.

Furthermore, within this ongoing debate, according to Hanke, even the pro-Indian hero, Las Casas, advanced racist claims and strategies, ironically in the interest of racial tolerance and equality. "Early in his career Las Casas proposed the introduction of Negro slaves to the islands, in order to spare the Indians the heavy labour which was destroying them" even though he "later repented" (9). Here again—the persistent clamor about color-blindness before the fifteenth century notwithstanding—there is reason to suspect that skin color might be playing a decisive role in the relations among Western Europeans and other peoples. I say this because both the Indians and the Africans were perceived as backwards, tribal peoples, with heathen religions, and both were shorter of stature and



with broader noses on average than the average Caucasian, so perhaps the most striking difference was one, not only of physical appearance, but of skin color in particular. Though the American Indians were darker-skinned than the Europeans, they were not as dark as the Africans, and apparently seemed to the Spanish to lack what they perceived as the Africans' animalistic, beast of burden capacities for grueling manual labor.

And despite Las Casas' later change of heart, Hanke insists, "Spaniards never fought, however, as hard or as consistently against Negro slavery as well as Indian slavery, not even Las Casas" (9). How is one to account for this difference in treatment? Could it be the result of racial, and perhaps even specifically color, prejudice? Hanke himself uses the language of race in this context when he asserts at the end of this chapter that "Each man, each faction, held a profound conviction about the nature of the Indians and all generalized about them as though they were one race" (10). Surely this undermines the claim that what was going on during the Spanish conquest was merely about religion and had nothing to do with race, and therefore perhaps indirectly undermines the similar claim about European/Afro-Arabic relations during the Middle Ages as well.

Chapter two of Hanke's book discusses the relationship between Aristotle and the Americas leading up to the fateful debate of 1550. He asserts that Las Casas' opponent in the debate, Sepúlveda, "not only sustained" Aristotle's theory of natural slavery "with great tenacity and erudition but also concluded that the Indians were in fact such rude and brutal beings that war against them to make possible their forcible Christianization was not only expedient but lawful" (13). Law, as for example in Aquinas' natural law theory, according to which human law should accord as much as possible with divine law, is supposed in Western culture to proceed along logical lines. And the language of the law aims to a discourse sufficiently clear and distinct so as not to impede the course of justice. With this law-logic connection in mind, one could paraphrase Hanke's previous point as follows: Sepúlveda asserted that the views of Aristotle lead, by the laws of logic (in argumentation) to an outcome that should be made into actual law (namely the legal permission for the king to conquer the Indians).

Buttressing this conclusion, undoubtedly, was the same frame of mind that I note elsewhere in the larger project in regard to Abelard's autobiography with respect to his leisurely lifestyle. "The town fathers of Buenos Aires," writes Hanke, "once informed the king [of Spain] that affairs were so bad there that Spaniards actually had to dig in the earth and plant crops if they were to eat" (14). And this was not an isolated incident. "Throughout the whole of the colonial period," Hanke asserts to the contrary, "and in all lands colonized by Spain this same attitude prevailed" (14). How is one to explain this aversion to manual labor that the Spanish exhibited in the Americas. Might it be related to an unyielding assumption of racial superiority to the indigenous peoples? I make this suggestion because this attitude that the Spanish should not dig in the earth would have to have been specific to the Americas, otherwise no Spanish people would have been planting food back home in Spain and the entire country would have perished from collective starvation. And if racial superiority was in play in these circumstances, might the comparatively darker skin of those indigenous peoples served as a justification?

There were heroic exceptions, however, who attempted to combat this logic of racism, and it is interesting to note that in some cases they fought logical fire with logical fire.

Domingo de Santo Tomás announced, for example, in the prologue to his *Gramática, o arte de la lengua general de los indios del Perú* [*Grammar, or art of the language of the Indians of Peru*] that his principal intention was to demonstrate, by his account of the beauties and subtleties of their language, the falsity of the idea that the Peruvian Indians were barbarous (23).

There are several points worthy of consideration in this passage. First, this is an instance of another grammar, another logic, which explicitly opposes the explicit intentions of the Spanish grammar discussed above. One could think of Tomás' grammar, then, as a kind of logic of rebellion against the Spanish grammar, and perhaps even a logic that suggests the possibility for an eventual Peruvian liberation, since one facilitator of cultural and political independence is a common, indigenous

language. Second, the emphasis on the beauty and aesthetics of Quechua [the dominant Peruvian language during the conquest] resonates with Aristotle's own emphasis on beauty as symptom of virtue and truth throughout his philosophy. This means that not only is Tomás using (Peruvian) grammar against (Spanish) grammar, and therefore logic against logic, but also (the aesthetic emphasis of) Aristotelianism against (the natural slavery theory of) Aristotelianism. Third, Hanke claims that Tomás wanted to refute the idea that the Peruvians were "barbarous," the adjectival form of "barbarians," a keyword connected in the Middle Ages to Aristotle's theory of natural slavery, which suggests that Tomás may have had this theory in mind when composing his Peruvian grammar. Elsewhere, reminiscent of later Aristotelian logic such as that of Abelard, Tomás objects that the American Indians were being treated "even worse than asses" (27). Finally, this overall strategy bears a striking resemblance to others in twentieth century philosophy, such as that of Nietzsche and Derrida—namely, to champion the (especially aesthetic) virtues of the stigmatized member of an important dichotomy in Western history, such as good/evil (for Nietzsche) and speech/writing (for Derrida)—which inspired the larger project of which this essay is a part.

Chapter three of Hanke's book proceeds to the immediate background of the debate, beginning with a portrait of Sepúlveda that shows him to be a direct descendant of the problematic Aristotelians in the Middle Ages, and a direct ancestor of the problematic Aristotelians of our own era. According to Hanke, Sepúlveda "possessed one of the best trained minds of his time, supported his views with many learned references, and enjoyed great prestige at court" and "had become one of the principal scholars in the recovery of the 'true' Aristotle" (31). Note again the intelligence, the consummate education, and the commitment to one unique truth, in a philosopher who appears likely entrenched in racism. If so, he probably came by this racism "honestly." At the time of the debate, Sepúlveda had just completed and published at Paris in 1548 his Latin translation of Aristotle's *Politics*, which he considered his principal contribution to knowledge. It was the best translation that had appeared, and was recognized for centuries as an indispensable work (31).

Sepúlveda thus had Aristotle's theory of natural slavery fresh in his mind when he joined the debate with Las Casas in 1550, the setting of which is the subject of Chapter Four of Hanke's text. "The disputants were to direct themselves," Hanke writes there, "to the specific issue: is it lawful for the king of Spain to wage war on the Indians before preaching the faith to them in order to subject them to his rule, so that afterwards they may be more easily instructed in the faith?" (38). Sepúlveda's answer, of course, was yes, and he attempted to justify this answer, drawing on Aquinas' just war theory—"that wars may be waged justly when their cause is just and when the authority carrying on the war is legitimate and conducts the war in the right spirit and the correct manner"—on the following grounds:

1. For the gravity of the sins which the Indians had committed, especially their idolatries and their sins against nature.
2. On account of the rudeness of their nature, which obliged them to serve persons having a more refined nature, such as the Spaniards.
3. In order to spread the faith, which would be more easily accomplished by the prior subjugation of the natives.
4. To protect the weak among the natives themselves (41).

Aristotle's theory of natural slavery comes in, clearly, in reason 2, and notice its proximity to the religious justification in reason 3. There seems to be an implicit connection between being inferior and heathen, on the one hand, and being superior and Christian, on the other. Can one even imagine this argument having been made, for example, if the "rude"-natured Indians happened to already be Christians?

In his portion of the debate itself, Sepúlveda explains that "natural slaves" can refer to "persons of both inborn rudeness and of inhuman and barbarous customs" (44). Here the racist views of the American Indians are linked to a cultural critique that borrows Aristotle's term for ethnically differ-

ent outsiders. Following Aristotle to the letter, Sepúlveda also argues that “prudent and wise men have dominion over them for their welfare as well as for the service given to their superiors” (45). In justifying his claim of inherent Spanish superiority, Sepúlveda, for some strange reason, includes among his litany of their virtuous acts “the sack of Rome in 1527,” even though, as Hanke informs the reader, “according to ‘one modern historian, the city was subjected ‘...to horrors far more awful than those of barbarian days’” (45). For example, “Monasteries and churches were burned, nuns violated” and “pregnant women were put to the sword” (45). What makes this choice of references even more surprising is that Sepúlveda himself “had followed the army into Rome and could scarcely have been ignorant of what actually happened” (46).

Again returning to the details of Aristotle’s thought in the actual debate, in the context of condemning the alleged cannibalism of the Indians, Sepúlveda noted that the Germans or “Scythians were cannibals, too,” but unlike the “cowardly” Indians “were fierce fighters” (46). Thus the Scythian-Ethiopian dichotomy also seems to have been a part of Sepúlveda’s conceptual toolbox. Additionally, following Aristotle’s hierarchy from the *Politics*, Sepúlveda asserted in front of the judges that “Indians are as inferior” as “‘children to adults, as women are to men’” (47). That he was willing to advance these claims is even more surprising given that he had to have been aware of considerable empirical evidence to the contrary. Hanke observes that, although “the remarkable mathematical achievements of the Mayas or the art and engineering feats of the Incas were not understood then,” nevertheless “much information was available” (49). How, then, is one to account for Sepúlveda’s irrational views regarding the intelligence and cultural sophistication of the Native Americans? Might racism be involved?

Sepúlveda held other problematic race-related views as well, as evidenced by his comparison of the Native Americans to the “Jews, whose ‘extermination God desired because their crimes and idolatry’” (69). Extermination is an extremely strong word for Sepúlveda to use here, and it is made stronger still retroactively by the term “extermination camp” that entered the world’s vocabulary in Nazi Germany. For this reason, perhaps, “One Guatemalan writer goes so far as to couple his name with that of Hitler as a proponent of repugnant racial doctrines” (95).

Despite the racist tenor of Sepúlveda’s arguments, “The judges at Valladolid,” unfortunately “fell into argument with one another and reached no collective decision,” and according to Hanke, “The facts available do not support conclusively the claim to victory of either contestant” (74). Less than a century after this anticlimactic and indecisive end to the debate, another advocate of a holy Christian war against essentially inferior, darker-skinned peoples was born, in Leipzig, Germany. His name was Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.

Before examining Leibniz’s own primary philosophical texts, I will begin my consideration of him with another book on the order of *Wittgenstein’s Ladder* and *Aristotle and the American Indians*: Matthew Stewart’s *The Courtier and the Heretic: Leibniz, Spinoza, and the Fate of God in the Modern World*. Its usefulness for my essay consists in its focus on Leibniz’s political orientation, and, in particular, on his conservative Christian sympathies vis-à-vis the atheistic alternative of philosophers such as Spinoza. It should be noted, however, that Stewart’s entertaining prose tends toward hyperbole and oversimplification, and thereby weakens a case already strongly supported by historical evidence.

But before taking even this step, in order to reassure the skeptical reader that there is in fact textual evidence for this general approach to Leibniz, I wish to briefly consider a short letter written by Leibniz to one of his many royal friends and benefactors. It is included in the Hackett anthology, *G.W. Leibniz: Philosophical Essays*, translated by Roger Ariew and Daniel Garber, and is titled there “Letter to Countess Elizabeth (?), on God and Formal Logic (1678)” (235).

## II. Leibniz on his own sociopolitical context

In the second paragraph, Leibniz sets the tone of the entire letter by asserting that “the demonstration of God’s existence and the immortality of our souls,” which he considers “the fruits of all our

studies," "constitutes the foundation of our greatest hopes" (235). His aim, which Stewart argues is always the case, is thus practical, not theoretical, which seems a bit surprising given the two aspects mentioned in the letter's subtitle, "God" and "Formal Logic." Referring to inquiries such as the latter, one of "the rigorous sciences," Leibniz describes them as "the touchstone of our thoughts. Everywhere the people flatter themselves and find flatterers, but there are very few mathematicians who have spread errors, and there are none who could get others to approve their mistakes" (236). This valorization of mathematics, of which the reader will soon observe many more examples in Leibniz, is probably his most distinctive and influential contribution to our larger narrative. Most importantly, this valorization seems to stem not from a love of the practice of mathematics for its own sake, as can be observed in professional mathematicians throughout history, but a pragmatic and nakedly self-serving utilization of mathematical theory.

When one reads here Leibniz' initial description of his interest in the subject as "an almost disproportionate passion," one might be inclined to think he belongs more appropriately in the mathematics-for-its-own-sake category, but the next paragraph clears up this potential misconception. "As for myself," Leibniz acknowledges frankly, "I cherished mathematics only because I found in it the traces of the art of invention in general" (237). He pursued mathematics, Leibniz tells the countess, "for the love of metaphysics," which, he has concluded, is "scarcely different from the true logic, that is, from the art of invention in general" (237). Note here, again, the seemingly redundant phrase "true logic," indicating that Leibniz, like most of his medieval predecessors, claims to be advancing the art or science of thought which appeared already complete in its invention by Aristotle. He, too, is in the race for logical perfection.

But he does not stop with the identification—the form of all truth for Leibniz, as I will show—of logic and metaphysics; "in fact," he asserts, "metaphysics is natural theology" (237). Here is where God enters the picture for Leibniz alongside logic. To recap this dizzying progress, math contains logic, which is the same thing as metaphysics, which is ultimately theology, the term Abelard popularized for the science of God. In brief, then, Leibniz pursued mathematics because he thought it led to God. And God, in turn, for Leibniz possesses one of the attributes most coveted by (and rarely granted to) logical entities. "This is because the idea of God contains within it absolute being, that is, what is absolutely simple in our thoughts, from which everything that we think draws its origin" (237). This connection highlights something that the reader may have overlooked above.

Identifying logic with the art of invention (*ars invendiendi*), and a logical attribute with a creator God, implies that logic is itself no longer a structure of thought, or a method of conceptual or linguistic analysis, but rather a creative enterprise capable of generating genuine novelty. This is an enormous increase in the perceived power and purview of logic in the history of Western thought. Another indication of this expansion can be found a few paragraphs later, when Leibniz asserts, contra Aristotle and the medievals, that "arguments in proper form do not always bear the stamp of *Barbara Celarent*," the latter words being shorthand devised in the Middle Ages for particular kinds of Aristotelian syllogism (238). On the contrary, "I dare say," Leibniz writes in a genuinely daring move, "that the account of the accountant and a calculation of analysis are arguments in proper form" (239). In other words, mathematical reasoning is a species of logical reasoning, and thus not only is it the case that logic a part of mathematics, as Leibniz asserted previously in this letter, but (at least parts of) mathematics are themselves logic.

But if mathematics is logic, then the formalizations offered by Aristotle's syllogisms in his logical texts are ultimately insufficient. "That is why," Leibniz proclaims, "I maintain that, in order to reason with evidence in all subjects"—including, thus, theological ones—"we must hold some consistent formalism [*formalité constante*]" (238). A more direct translation of the French might be "constant formality." Aristotle's formality, the syllogisms, were supposed to be used only during arguments, at key moments in the lifelong process of intellectual inquiry. Leibniz's expanded sense of logic, however, requires much more. It requires a system, which, to paraphrase the previous quotation, is not

only completely formal, but also permanently formal. “There would be less eloquence,” Leibniz concedes in regard to this proposal, “but more certainty” (239). Less beauty, more exact control. Less aesthetic value, but less anxiety in a less uncertain world.

But in order to determine the formalism that would do no less in metaphysics, physics, and morals, than calculation does in mathematics, that would even give us degrees of probability when we can only reason probabilistically, I would have to relate here the thoughts I have on a new characteristic [*characteristique*], something that would take too long (239).

This sentence, coming toward the end of the long final paragraph of the letter, in the context of Leibniz’s typical interactions with royalty, seems in all probability a teaser, meant to stir the countess’ curiosity about that in Leibniz’s work which was to have the greatest influence on the history of logic—the universal characteristic.

Leibniz claims that this *characteristica universalis* would “represent our thoughts truly and distinctly,” and that “when a thought is composed of other simpler ones, its character would also be similarly composed (240). What “would follow from this perfection of the sciences,” Leibniz raves of himself, again returning to the theme of perfection, “would appear incredible” (240). That this characteristic was, according to Stewart, one of the “earliest ancestors” of the modern computer, would seem to bear out this conceit (12). But what seems to matter most to Leibniz lies somewhere else altogether, in “that the foundation of my characteristic is also the foundation of the demonstration of God’s existence” (240). In this way, the countess and the reader are returned to the beginning of the letter, and Leibniz’s “highest hopes.” And on that teasing note I leave Leibniz’s own writings for now, to consider the life that both inspired the universal characteristic and tried to make of it, and thus of formal logic per se, a weapon for holy war.

### III. Stewart on Leibniz’s philosophy

War is also the topic that Stewart uses to begin the story of Leibniz’s life, specifically The Thirty Years War. During this conflict, according to Stewart, “the population of Germany” alone “declined from 21 million to 13 million,” it “represented a catastrophe for intellectual life in the German lands, too” and the peace treaty that ended it became “known to contemporaries as the Peace of Exhaustion” (40). “It was amid such craving for a good night’s sleep,” Stewart observes in his wry style, that “Leibniz first opened his eyes” (40). In this way Stewart sets up his argument that Leibniz was above all a peacemaker, seeking to end hostilities by any means necessary, no matter how insincere and duplicitous.

Leibniz’s father “occupied a prestigious position in the town’s theological infrastructure” and was “professor of moral philosophy at the University of Leipzig” (41). Leibniz was thus born, in a sense, into the priesthood in which all of the medieval philosophers lived, and when he entered that same university, at the ripe old age of fourteen, “he continued his intensive study of Aristotle and the scholastics” (43). Leibniz’s doting father had died when Leibniz was only six, and according to Stewart, “he spend his entire life attached to one authority figure or another” (44). As for his treatment of those under his own authority, his longtime secretary and biographer “notes that toward his domestic servants he was ‘inclined to fits of passion, but quickly pacified’” (46). And Leibniz noted in himself that the “choleric tendencies,” or tendencies to anger, “seem to have the ascendancy” or dominant position in his temperament (47).

Leibniz’s professional career began, oddly, with alchemy. He claims that, “baffled by their bizarre symbols and opaque texts,” “he composed a parody of their efforts, making incomprehensible claims by means of unintelligible symbols, and forwarded it to the president of the [alchemical] society” (48). Interestingly, this rhetoric could be similarly applied to Leibniz’s own examples of philosophical shorthand, such as his *Monadology*. But it seems, as I will show below, most appropriate for his abortive attempts at the universal characteristic. In any case, the presumably clueless president of the



alchemists offered Leibniz a job as secretary, and Leibniz took it. "In private however," Stewart claims in opposition to Leibniz's version of this story, "he exhibited an avid interest in the subject throughout his life" (48). This is the first instance, and note that it is a double instance, of the deceptiveness that characterized Leibniz's professional activities throughout his life.

The second major instance of such deception, again connected to Leibniz's mathematical-logical methods, was a treatise his employer had him compose in support of "a German aspirant" to a recently-vacated Polish throne. Leibniz cooperated, and "demonstrated in quasi-geometrical fashion that [his employer] Boineburg's man had in his favor not just the genealogical tables, but also the accumulated wisdom of the greatest philosophers in history" (49). This, too, sounds like an apt description of the universal characteristic project, and is, furthermore, a case in which Leibniz as logician attempted to disguise a complex history in artificial abstractions for his own self-interest and political gain—the pattern I have suggested has been operative since the beginnings of formal logic in Aristotle. Additionally, given that the treatise "would be more likely to achieve its effect if it were believed to be the work of someone with a less German-sounding name," Leibniz and his employer "put it out under the name of Georgius Ulicovius Lithuanus" (49). Ultimately, however, the German candidate was ultimately passed over for the throne. As these historical facts pile up, it seems that greater and greater distrust is appropriate regarding Leibniz, even though I have surveyed here only the first year of his long career.

As a transition between this biography and his own philosophical writings, I will now summarize how Stewart portrays Leibniz as a thinker in view of his life. He "turned to philosophy," Stewart claims, "in order to solve *other* people's problems," and the "maxim that guided him throughout his long and colorful life" was "'Justice is the charity of the wise'" (76, emphasis in original). An implication of these stances might be that Leibniz had (or believed he had) everything figured out for himself, and that ethical relationships among the community is the burden of those "wise" ones like himself, respectively. Consequently, in his "letters written to some person of importance," which comprises most of his philosophical work, his goal "was not necessarily to reveal the truth, but to get something done" (77). And this something was usually to achieve some kind of political peace, as evinced by Stewart's observation that, "Just out of his teenage years, he adopted the pseudonym *Guilielmus Pacidius*," translated roughly as *Wilhelm Peace-God* (78).

Moving on to the means whereby Leibniz attempted to refashion himself as a deity, which is the ultimate subject of this essay, Stewart remarks that Leibniz's universal characteristic "fascinates not on account of any results it achieved, but as an expression of a certain kind of aspiration" (79). This aspiration is political, and his politics "may ultimately be summed up," Stewart writes, "in one word: theocracy," an "ideal state" that "derives its legitimacy" ultimately "from the eternal truths established by philosophy" (80). One crucial phase in the establishment of this theocracy—and one which raises again the question of race in Leibniz's life and work—was a political and military campaign almost too outlandish to be believed, which Stewart refers to as "the Egypt Plan" (85).

In essence, the Egypt Plan proposed that the "German states could relieve themselves of the threat from France" by "persuading Louis XIV to divert his armies to the conquest of Egypt" (85). In addition to the fact that Egypt is on the continent that is home to the darkest-skinned peoples in the world, there were other potentially-racial dimensions to this plan. "Instead of Christians killing Christians," Leibniz argued, "Christians would be killing infidels," specifically the dark-skinned Muslims of North Africa (85). Along with its briefer title, "Leibniz also sometimes referred to his proposal as 'The Plan for a New Holy War'" (85). Leibniz the medievalist wanted nothing less than a new crusade.

But the philosopher that Stewart describes as desiring peace above all else seems to have been interested, at least initially, with peace among only the Europeans, and thus primarily among white people. Moreover, it seems likely that Leibniz was not even a Christian. His secretary observed in his biography of Leibniz that he "rarely saw him in church, and he never knew him to take communion," and that "the villagers and aristocrats" in the town he lived in for forty years called him



“Loewenix, meaning ‘believer in nothing’” (83). Nevertheless, Leibniz was so enthusiastic, in the literal sense of the word, about this idea that he even “composed a lavish poem to celebrate the impending crusade” (86). Perhaps he wanted, more than any thing else, to be in control, to rule as William Peace-God instead of serving the Christian one. A later maxim of Leibniz’s seems suggestive on this point: “It is necessary to snare the world in the trap, to take advantage of its weakness, and to deceive it in order to heal it” (138). On, then, to the formula language for the clear and precise presentation of the pure and innocent truth.

#### IV. Leibniz on his own philosophy

In his “Preface to a Universal Characteristic (1678-79),” Leibniz asserts early on that “there is nothing that cannot be numbered” (5). There is room to doubt this apparently simple claim, particularly in the arena of feelings, representations, dreams, etc., but it seems widely, if not predominantly, accepted by many philosophers. The next sentence, however, goes in a more complex and extreme direction. “And so number is, as it were, metaphysical shape, and arithmetic is, in a certain sense, the Statics of the Universe, that by which the power of things are investigated” (5). This sentence deserves careful, extended attention.

As for the first part, if shape is the form or outline of a thing, and metaphysics is the study of things as they really are, then “metaphysical shape” might mean something like the true outline, or the true form. The claim that this true form is numeric would seem to suggest that quality is inessential, since qualities belong to a conceptual category distinct from numeration. It would also seem to suggest the possibility that even substance is only important as a numerable entity. Thus, the other nine of Aristotle’s *Categories*—“what,” “where,” “when,” “in relation to what,” “in what position,” “holding what,” “how acting” and “how being acted upon”—all fade away before their sibling, “how many.” Truth becomes leaner, simpler, more efficient, and more ruthlessly and violently abstract.

As for the second part, if arithmetic is the discipline of counting, and statics is understood in opposition to dynamics, then the arithmetical “Statics of the Universe” would involve a taking of inventory, or census, of everything in the cosmos. This conception implies that the universe is, in some sense, fixed, stable and composed of permanent and discrete units that can be counted. In other words, the universe is like a giant puzzle, all put together, and just waiting for someone to trace all the lines that form the boundaries among the various puzzle pieces.

And the last phrase of the quote sheds further light on why, and in what way, number and countability are important here. There is power in numbers, and if one knows how many things there are in the cosmos, and how many members of each species of thing, then one knows roughly how powerful each species is, and what each is capable of doing. It was perhaps for this reason that, according to 1 Chronicles 27:23-24, King David took a census of the nation of Israel, and was then punished by God. This passage is often interpreted to mean that David was trusting in himself, and not God, and trying to estimate his capacity to wage war based on the size of his army. In a similar way, Leibniz, as lifelong peacemaker, might have been interested in the ability of any one part of the world to “wage war” on another part, particularly one European nation against another.

Reminiscent of another famous biblical story of human hubris and a corresponding divine punishment, Leibniz suggests two paragraphs later that through the “help” of a “Universal Characteristic” such as his own, “different nations can communicate their thoughts, and each, in its own language, read what the other wrote” (6). I am referring of course to the Tower of Babel, a project of ambitious men to build a structure high enough to reach the dwelling place of the gods, in response to which God supposedly initiated the great diversity of human languages, in order to prevent the workers from communicating well enough to finish the tower. Leibniz, the son of a theologian, and a scholar of the medieval Christians, is thus in a sense trying to single-handedly reverse the Judeo-Christian God’s judgment against human aspiration to the divine. Might one understand William Peace-God, then, as trying here to play god?

A little further down, Leibniz refers (in anticipation of Frege's way of carrying out a similar project) to the characteristic as "an alphabet of human thoughts," and one through which "all things can be discovered and judged" (7). Leibniz specifically credits Aristotle, who "examined the inner depth of notions with great skill" as an inspiration in this project, but criticizes Descartes for not seeing its importance, as "a way of establishing a rational philosophy as clear and unshakable as arithmetic" (8). Surprisingly, Leibniz shifts abruptly in the last half of that sentence to the religious language of "sects," and claims that "a sect using this sort of reasoning would immediately arise as soon as it exercised control over reason, as in geometry, and would not perish or weaken until the human race lost knowledge altogether through the invasion of some new barbarian horde" (8). It is unclear whether the sect or the reasoning is what would take "control" of reason here, but Leibniz's use of rhetoric of dominance and mastery, followed by that of strength and survival, seems telling. The same philosopher who spoke earlier in this essay of "the true Cabbala" is here linking his universal characteristic to (a) religious division, (b) warfare and perhaps even (c) ethnic-racial prejudice. I suggest the latter because "barbarian hordes" are typically imagined as consisting of ethnic or racial groups different from one's own, such as Teutonic tribes in the eyes of ancient Romans or Native Americans in the eyes of United States settlers.

The next paragraph gets to the heart of what the characteristic is all about, as Leibniz writes of developing/assigning "characteristic numbers for all ideas" (8). In case this point has not been clear already, Leibniz's aim and goal with his universal characteristic is to establish a one-to-one correspondence between numerals and concepts. So, for example, "142" might be the number for "acid reflux." And "3" might be the number for "awake." Leibniz optimistically estimates that, for "a few chosen persons," the creation of this characteristic would only take "five years; in two years they could set forth those doctrines most often used in daily life, that is, morals and metaphysics in an unshakable calculus" (8). Note here the second appearance of the vivid adjective "unshakable." What kind of shaking is Leibniz so concerned about? What happens when the shakable thing shakes? What happens if shaking were never to occur again?

One hint as to what Leibniz has in mind can be found in the same place in this text wherein the reader also finds the other moment in which logic and racism intersect most vividly in his life and work. In a phrase that could almost be a verbatim quotation from Bishop Avila's answer to Queen Isabella, Leibniz asserts that "nothing is more effective for the propagation of the faith than this invention, except for miracles and the holiness of an Apostolic man or the victories of a great monarch" (9). When one encounters the (almost inevitably darker-skinned) indigenous people, there is no better way—aside from outright warfare a la Sepúlveda—to "whiten" them (to use contemporary academic parlance) than to use the universal characteristic. If, as Avila asserted, "language is the perfect instrument of empire," then the perfect language of the universal characteristic would be an even more perfect instrument thereof. Leibniz elaborates in the next sentence as follows:

For wherever missionaries can once introduce this language, the true religion, the religion entirely in agreement with reason will be established and in the future apostasy will be feared no more than we fear that people will condemn arithmetic or geometry, once they have learned it (9).

Just as there is a "true logic" for Leibniz, so there is one "true religion" that corresponds to it, and what is more, the latter can be promulgated and sustained by the former. Logic, expressed in the universal characteristic, is the ultimate weapon in the war for souls. It is the one way to destroy the enemy's ability to fight back, to disagree and challenge the orthodoxy. Las Casas could not have resisted Sepúlveda at all, and thus had a significant impact on future European-Native American relations, had Sepúlveda possessed the power of Leibniz's invention. As matters were, Las Casas was able to draw on rhetoric, eloquence, and the force of his character and decades of direct experience and service to the Native Americans. For just this kind of reason, Leibniz ultimately goes beyond even the creator of the Spanish grammar, insisting that "we must go beyond words" (9). But going beyond words, as Leibniz the alleged peacemaker was unlikely to have forgotten, almost always means to resort to force.

Perhaps Stewart is, in the end, wrong about Leibniz, and saw a peacemaker instead of a kind of tyrant. That Leibniz craved political power is clear to Stewart, as he expresses in both amusing and disturbing anecdotes. An example of the former, amusing, kind is that Leibniz, at one, seemingly arbitrary point late in life “began to sign his letters with a small and illegible squiggle between his first and last names—a squiggle that grew in confidence until it unmistakably represented a *v*, as in Gottfried Wilhelm *von* Leibniz” (258). In other words, Leibniz tried to gradually, deceptively “make himself” into a nobleman. “Eventually,” however, “the squiggled ennoblement vanished from his letters as mysteriously as it had arisen” (258).

An example of the latter, more disturbing, kind is found in a letter to Foucher (1675), and it relates to Descartes’ famous evil demon—the being he speculated may be ruling the world in place of God and deceiving us into thinking that our sensations correspond accurately to a world around us. “I do not see,” Leibniz writes, “that his power would be imperfect on that account” (4). Leibniz, in all likelihood an unbeliever himself, apparently saw no harm into deceiving entire civilizations into a belief in the Christian God as a means to an end—the end of a world in peace with Leibniz in power.

In case the description of Leibniz as a tyrant still sounds extreme to the reader, it might be helpful to look briefly at the “Samples of the Numerical Characteristic (1679).” There one can see how Leibniz thought the final product would work, “without any mental effort or danger of error,” for a world with, by implication, no more risk or mindfulness—and thus a world that seems conceptually akin to dystopias such as those of *Brave New World* and *1984* (10).

## V. Questions of race in Leibniz’s logic

These writings, according to the translators, “represent only one of a number of different formalisms Leibniz explored before eventually setting the problems aside” (10). True to the basis of logic, the writings begin by asserting the necessity of distinguishing between “form and subject matter” (10). His first example involves triangles, and thus mathematics. The second moves to science, but suggests his interest in alchemy, with a syllogism involving minerals, metals and gold. As he moves from syllogisms to the characteristic proper, he alerts the reader that his concern for the present will be with “fictitious numbers, which, for the time being, can be used in place of the true characteristic numbers” (11). This means both that this logical, or pseudo-logical, enterprise is self-consciously shot through with the imaginary, and also that Leibniz thinks there is one true arrangement of the characteristic, as opposed to there being a variety of arbitrary possibilities which could work equally well due to their formal properties.

Leibniz’s first example of propositions to be translated into their characteristic numbers explicitly involves religion, in the role of that which facilitates ethical well-being. It is the following: “a pious person is happy” (11). He then introduces “wicked” as an antonym for the pious, in the proposition “a wicked person is not happy” (11). Then the rhetoric shifts, abruptly to contemporary ears, from religion to economics, with “some wicked person is wealthy” (11). Having previously stressed the ineliminability of the subject and predicate, Leibniz goes on to assert that “In every proposition, the predicate is said to be in the subject, that is, the notion of the predicate is contained in the notion of the subject” (11). Plugging this insight back into Leibniz’s above two examples, this would mean (a) that happiness is completely contained in, subjugated by, or within the realm of piety, and thus of religious rectitude and orthodoxy; and (b) material prosperity and success is within the province and dominion of at least some people who lack piety, such as perhaps the non-Christian American Indians believed in Leibniz’s day to possess vast amounts of gold. As I have observed in Hanke, Sepúlveda argued that the Native Americans’ wickedness meant that they could be lawfully conquered in order to be converted to Christianity, and in the process their unworthily-held riches could be justifiably confiscated. On this note, I wish to suggest, especially in light of the aforementioned details from Leibniz’s life and thought, that there might be a significant connotation here, in the concept of “containment,” of political assimilation and tyrannical control. In the OED alone, the

second of two variations on the definition of the word “containment” is overtly political, referring to “The action or policy of ‘containing’ a hostile nation, etc.” Put differently, the subject is the conqueror of the predicate, and the predicate is the serf of the subject-lord.

The next important point in the text concerns what Leibniz terms “composite notions,” which he understands to be “composed of other notions, sometimes positive, and sometimes negative” (12). These can, accordingly, be expressed “by means of two characteristic numbers, one with the sign ‘+’ or ‘plus,’ the other with the sign ‘-’ or ‘minus’” (12). His first example of this notation—which is the basic format that every other notation takes in this version of the characteristic—is as follows:

“A prime number is a number that is indivisible.”

+22                      -17

With this basis, the characteristic number for every “notion” can be derived “by multiplying all of the characteristic numbers of those positive (negative) notions from which the positive (negative) notion of that term is composed” (12). Again, it is easier to illustrate this than to explain it.

Thus, suppose:	animal	rational
	+13 -5	+8 -7
Then for this term:	man	
The characteristic number is:	+(13 x 8) - (5 x 7)	
that is:	+104	- 35

The most important part of this process is to make sure that the positive and negative characteristic numbers for any complex notion “do not have a common divisor,” which would imply that one aspect was present both positively (on the + side) and negatively (on the - side), and in this system, two numbers that have the same magnitude but opposite +/- values represent contradictory propositions (12-13). This, in turn, is fundamentally important to Leibniz because he maintains that “every *false* proposition that can be known through reason alone, that is, every one that involves falsity in its terms, is such that its subject and predicate contain incompatible notions” (13, *emphasis original*). The point of all this notation then, is that the trained reader could simply look for a common denominator between the subject and predicate terms of any proposition for which those terms’ characteristic number is known; if any exists, the proposition must be false, because contradictory.

Leibniz’s first example of such a contradictory proposition, the falsity of which is apparent at the level of its characteristic numbers, returns to the well of religious morality, and is that “A pious person is wretched” (13). It seems probable, given the similarity of these terms to the previous ones, that “wretched” is intended here as an antonym to “happy.” The meaning seems clear. Orthodox Christians can never truly be unhappy as long as they are fully pious. Leibniz’s next concrete example is also the final quote that I will analyze from the “Sample of a Numerical Characteristic.” After reminding the reader “that the notion of the predicate is always in the subject,” Leibniz offers the example of “Every wise person is pious” (13). Thus, every truly wise philosopher, and thus every true philosopher—presumably intended to include Leibniz himself—is also an orthodox (since pious) Christian. Others, such as Spinoza, Averroes, and some versions of Aristotle, though they might appear wise, are not so after all, because they are lacking for Leibniz in the religion of Christianity.

Since these two texts, which introduce and attempt the Universal Characteristic, abound in language related to God, I will conclude this essay by taking a brief look at Leibniz’s treatment of this subject elsewhere in his writings. First, in his first philosophical publication (“Meditations on Knowledge, Truth, and Ideas”), Leibniz claims that “nothing is truer than that we have an idea of God and that a most perfect being is possible, indeed necessary” (26). Second, in “On Contingency (1686?)” Leibniz describes this God as one “who alone traverses the infinite series in one stroke of mind,” and concludes that “we must concede that God always acts wisely” (29). And, third, according to letters

from Leibniz to Arnauld, part of this wisdom evidently dictated that “the souls of brutes would have all been created from the beginning of the world,” whereas “the rational soul is created only at the time of the formation of its body” (79).

The word for brute in French is a perfect cognate of the English, and like the English refers to rudeness, barbarity and animality, and can even function as a synonym for beasts. The barbarian’s soul, then, is part of the mere furniture of the world, like the rational soul’s body, “or the *cadaver*,” which, according to Leibniz (in the same letter), “can be called a substance only in an improper sense, just as in the case of a machine or a pile of stones” (78). Irrational humans, or brutes, which would probably include the American Indians and black Africans, thus fare no better with Leibniz than non-human animals in Descartes, mere machines with no stake in immortality.

As a complement to this conception of the darkness of the dark peoples, Leibniz elsewhere asserts (in a letter to Queen Sophie Charlotte of Prussia) that “the force of the conclusions of reasoning” is “found in this I [sic] and in the understanding,” and is “part of what is called the natural light” (189, emphasis original). Leibniz goes on to explain to her majesty that “It is also by this *natural light*,” again in emphatic script, “that the *axioms* of mathematics are recognized” (189). Several paragraphs later he repeats to the queen, again with syntactic emphasis, that “there is an *inborn light within us*,” and that this is, to return to the brutes, “an advantage we have over the beasts” (191). Thus knowledge and rationality are again linked to light, which is possessed naturally and inherently, and which God denies to the “brutes”—potentially inclusive, as I noted above, of darker-skinned humans as well.

## VI. Conclusion: questions of race in Western formal logic in general

Through the analyses in this essay, I wish to suggest that it is meaningful and helpful to think of Leibniz’s primary achievement in the history of formal logic—the attempt at a universal characteristic—in the context of the most politically profound use for which he recommended it—the conversion to Christianity of dark-skinned non-Europeans—and the specific example of such conversion for which he personally advocated—the Egypt Plan. Leibniz describes himself as having pursued mathematical logic in order to get to God, he markets his numerical characteristic as capable of facilitating that end, and he tries to persuade the most powerful person in Europe, Louis XIV, to conquer Africa in part to Christianize the people there. But despite all this, there is considerable evidence both that Leibniz did not himself believe in God or consider himself a Christian in the ordinary sense, and also that he was singularly, even obsessively, concerned with world peace, even at the cost of global deception and the rule of a church whose rituals he neglected. What could have motivated this logician, who was a student of Aristotle and the medievals, and likely a non-Christian, to try to facilitate a conquest of the world in Christ’s name?

Perhaps it was nothing other than the racism sometimes attributed to Aristotle, but under the new guise of anti-heathenism. No longer, in Leibniz, does this racism declare itself explicitly in opposition to people with darker skin. Instead, this opposition is masked by the new explicit opposition to non-Christians. But the particular non-Christians who are opposed do in fact happen to be members of large civilizations, culturally heterogeneous to Europe, whose skin is significantly darker than that of the average European. Is this merely a coincidence? It is widely accepted that skin color is often an important index to various racial differences, both real and imagined, so might it not be the case that this darker skin, as one marker (among many) of racial difference, might symbolize a meaningful connection between racism and Leibniz and his formal logic?

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# Schopenhauerian Musical Formalism: Meaningfulness without Meaning

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CHENYU BU

**Abstract:** I develop *Schopenhauerian musical formalism*. First, I present a Schopenhauerian account of music with a background of his metaphysical framework. Then, I define *meaningfulness* as an analog to a Kantian notion of *purposiveness* and argue that, in light of Schopenhauer, music is meaningful as a direct manifestation of the universal will. Given the ineffable nature of what music points to, its form lacks any representation of meaning. Music is therefore *the mere form of meaningfulness*, and it is precisely this mere form that gives rise to the infinite possibilities to ascribe it with a variety of musical meaning.

**Keywords:** philosophy of music, musical formalism, Schopenhauer, aesthetics, Kant

## I. Introduction

Music has been arguably the most philosophically curious and theoretically laden among the arts. It has a sense of meaningfulness that seems to be illuminated by a quasi-logical and quasi-syntactical structure, yet what it means is often found to be evanescent and ineffable. There were several converging trends in nineteenth-century aesthetics to marry the meaningfulness of music to variations on formalism.<sup>1</sup> A point of consummation was witnessed in the seminal work of the Viennese music critic Eduard Hanslick, *Vom Musikalisch Schönen* (“On the Musically Beautiful”; abbreviated as “VMS” hereafter), which went through ten editions from 1854 to the author’s death in 1904. Hanslick’s declaration “The content of music is tonally moving form (*tönend bewegte Formen*)” (29) almost became the motto of musical formalism ever since.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, contemporary views of music are considerably indebted to Hanslick’s formalist approach to music.<sup>3</sup> However, musical formalism as such—on which music is construed as sonic architecture with its intrinsic formal properties<sup>4</sup>—casts a shadow over musical meaning. For strictly speaking, “tonally moving forms” on their own, powerfully dynamic and remarkably articulate as they may be, are devoid of any “extramusical” reference. The focus on musical form seems to overlook the *affective* aspect of music, that is, the ways in which music is found to be connected with the world and whereby it can afford us musical experience that is full of emotions, expressions, imaginations, and so on. According to Kivy, what is needed is an “intellectually respectable description of music that is not remote from the humanistic understanding to which music itself has traditionally appealed” (*Sound Sentiment* 10–11).<sup>5</sup> A challenge to the formalist approach to music, then, is to give an account of musical form that makes room for—ideally, explains the very possibility of—musical meaning.

This paper is set out to offer such an account with inspirations drawn from Schopenhauer, whose thoughts about music not only had considerable influence on philosophers (especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) but also on a surprising number of musicians and music theorists.<sup>6</sup> Although Schopenhauer himself was quite frank about the limited extent to which aesthetic theorizing can take us in the case of music,<sup>7</sup> I think there is a clear line of argument to be teased out from his musical remarks which is in the spirit of the classic formalist approach to music. Moreover,

the general framework of Schopenhauer's metaphysics provides important insights into how the musical form may give rise to musical meaning. Therefore, in this paper I will develop what I call *Schopenhauerian musical formalism* and show that the formalist account of music does not impose constraints on the possibility or even on the range of musical meaning. Rather, by defining music as the *mere form of meaningfulness*, I will argue that musical meaning has its ground precisely in musical form as such.

Here is an overview of the paper. Section II presents a Schopenhauerian account of music within his background framework of metaphysics. Section III extrapolates the notion of *meaningfulness*. The general strategy may be thought of as analogous to how Kant derives the notion of *purposiveness* in the case of beauty. I will argue that music is both *purposive* as a form of art and *meaningful* as an immediate manifestation of the universal will,<sup>8</sup> and furthermore, that music is the *mere form* of meaningfulness. That is, music is conceived of as meaningful, though there is no particular meaning to be found in music itself. Section IV further explicates the relation between musical form and musical meaning. The absence of meaning in music itself is due to the equally unrepresentable nature of what music points to, i.e., the universal will itself, but it is precisely its mere form of meaningfulness that retains its infinite potential to be ascribed with a variety of musical meaning.

## II. A Schopenhauerian Account of Music

Nearly every instance of Schopenhauer's musical remarks could be regarded as one or another branch springing from the central trunk of a single idea:

Thus music is as *immediate* an objectification and copy of the whole *will* as the world itself is, indeed as the Ideas are, the multiplied phenomenon of which constitutes the world of individual things. Therefore music is by no means like the other arts, namely a copy of the Ideas, but a *copy of the will itself*, the objectivity of which are the Ideas. For this reason the effect of music is so very much more powerful and penetrating than is that of the other arts, for these others speak only of the shadow, but music of the essence. (*The World as Will and Representation* 257; emphasis in original)<sup>9</sup>

This passage contains a number of Schopenhauerian terminology (e.g., will, Ideas, objectification), each of which needs to be unpacked.

Schopenhauer describes the phenomenal world as the world of *representation*. The objects as they appear to us are merely appearances, which are necessarily in accordance with and conditioned by what he calls the *principium individuationis*, i.e., space and time, and the *Principle of Sufficient Reason*. In ordinary experience, we as cognizing subjects only perceive the representations of objects with certain obligatory relations, rather than things as they are in themselves. For Schopenhauer, there is only one thing-in-itself, namely, the *will*. Every representation, every individual being is an objectification of the universal will:

But only the will is *thing-in-itself*; as such it is not representation at all, but *toto genere* different therefrom. It is that of which all representation, all object, is the phenomenon, the visibility, the objectivity. It is the innermost essence, the kernel, of every particular thing and also of the whole. (*WWR* 110)

The term “will (*Wille*)” is used by Schopenhauer in two distinct ways: There is the will as the essence of the world, the endless striving and eternal becoming,<sup>10</sup> and there is also the will manifested in individuals, understood as the *objectifications* of the universal will as the particular acts of willing. I will refer to the first as the *universal will* and refer to instances of the second as *individuated wills*. Schopenhauer claims that the universal will manifests in “every blindly acting force of nature” as well as every “deliberate conduct of man” (*WWR* 110). Those individuated wills (in nature and in human beings) differ with respect only to their *degrees* of manifestation but not to the essence of what is manifested.

In art, the universal will manifests in the form of *Ideas*. Schopenhauer defines an Idea as an adequate objectification of the universal will in a determinate and fixed level.<sup>11</sup> On the one hand, Ideas

are distinguished from particular objects, in that Ideas are “the eternal form of things, not themselves entering into time and space” and “remain fixed, subject to no change, always being, never having become,” while particular objects “arise and pass away” and are “always becoming and never are” (*WWR* 129). On the other hand, Ideas are also distinguished from the universal will, in that Ideas exist in multiplicity. There exist infinitely many degrees of manifestation, whereas the universal will is *unique*, the only thing-in-itself. Thus, an Idea may be understood as something which stands in between a particular object, e.g., an artwork, in which it is objectified, and the universal will itself: the Idea is an individuated manifestation of the universal will, yet it does not enter into to the world of representations and remains in it eternal, unchanging form.

For Schopenhauer, art is where Ideas come to be cognized. An aesthetic experience originates in the cognition of the Ideas, and the only goal of an artwork is the communication of this cognition.<sup>12</sup> When the subject grasps the Ideas through her aesthetic contemplation, she transcends her ordinary individual as a willing being and becomes a “pure subject of knowing” (*WWR* 179). What she cognizes in such an experience is the eternal Idea that is objectified in the artwork. The aesthetic contemplation thus bring the subject beyond the representation of the artwork as a mere object.

Manifestations of the universal will in Ideas come with degrees as well. Different forms of art objectify Ideas which manifest the universal will in various degrees. Schopenhauer introduces a hierarchy of the fine arts:

We began with architecture, whose aim as such is to elucidate the objectification of the will at the lowest grade of its visibility, where it shows itself as the dumb striving of the mass, devoid of knowledge and conforming to law . . . Our observations ended with tragedy, which presents to us in terrible magnitude and distinctness at the highest grade of the will's objectification that very conflict of the will with itself. (*WWR* 255)

Music is ranked at the top of this hierarchy. The other arts are imitations or repetitions of Ideas, but music is directly a copy of the universal will. That is, there is no Ideas in music but only the thing-in-itself. Music manifests the universal will without mediating through the Ideas and is thereby regarded as a universal expression to the highest degree.<sup>13</sup> Thus, we may say that the world just *is* embodied music, in as much as it is the embodied universal will.

In a nutshell, a Schopenhauerian account of music begins with the metaphysical contrast between representations and the thing-in-itself:

- [i] Objects as they appear are mere representations, and the only thing-in-itself is the universal will, which is the sole essence of the world.

In ordinary experience, we cognize objects only as they appear, conditioned by relations obligatory to representations in the same way we ourselves are as individual subjects. In aesthetic experience, however, the universal will is revealed to us in the form of Ideas through our aesthetic contemplation, in which we become the pure subject of knowledge.

- [ii] Art makes the universal will cognizable (in a subject's aesthetic experience) by means of objectifying Ideas, which are the eternal forms manifesting the universal wills at some particular levels.

Music stands apart from the other arts in that it passes over Ideas. Rather,

- [iii] Music is a direct manifestation of the universal will itself.

Thus, the notion of music on this account is twofold. On the one hand, music points to a true and profound knowledge of the world, i.e., the universal will. On the other hand, in contemplating music as such in our aesthetic experience, we also come to appreciate the fact that we ourselves—as individual human beings subject to the universal will—share the very same essence with music and thus with the whole world. By revealing the world's inner nature to be also the source of our own willing and feeling, music reveals the essential tension between and the mutual involvement of our knowledge of the world and of the entire endeavor of humankind.

With the Schopenhauerian account of music situated within his more general metaphysical framework, in the next two sections I shall turn to the task of developing the formalist view that music is meaningful in virtue of its form, that is, music *means* in a way that is abstract, universal, and essential, without involving representations. Section III refines the notion of music as the *mere form of meaningfulness*, and then section IV demonstrates the explanatory power of this notion for the possibility and the range of musical meaning.

### III. Music as the Mere Form of Meaningfulness

In this section, I will first formulate the notion of *meaningfulness* by extrapolating Kant's formulation of *purposiveness* in his discussion of beauty.<sup>14</sup> Then, I will explain why music may be regarded as the form of meaningfulness in light of Schopenhauer.

The term "purposiveness" is philosophically loaded mainly owing to Kant's *Critique of Judgment*. In the Third Moment of the Analytic of the Beautiful, Kant offers the following gloss of the term:

[K1] Purposiveness (*forma finalis*) is the causality of a concept with regard to its object. (5:220)<sup>15</sup>

An object is said to be purposive when it is possible to think of the object in terms of a concept that is regarded as the purpose of the object's form or existence. The thinking of the concept is a determining ground for and prior to the causal connection thus established between the object and its purpose, viz. a representation of its purposiveness. For instance, when we think of a hammer as purposive, we regard it as a tool used for hammering, in which case the concept of hammering is a determining ground for and is acquired prior to our representation of the hammer as having a purpose.

Importantly, grasping an object's purposiveness can be independent from representing it with any *particular* purpose. As Kant points out, if we think of an object not with respect to any determinate concept but merely due to the possibility of conceiving the object as having a purpose, then the object in question is said to embody the form of purposiveness without the representation of a purpose. In Kant's words,

[K2] Purposiveness can exist without representation of a purpose, insofar as its form is derived not from a determinate concept, but only from the *possibility* of conceiving the object as purposive. (5:220)

Kant's paradigm example to illustrate [K2] is *beauty*. He claims that when we consider an object to be beautiful, we are conceiving of it as purposive in virtue of its having a certain kind of formal structure which makes possible a "free play of the imagination and understanding" (5:218). Unlike in the case of hammer, where we are able to pin down a determinate concept as the hammer's purpose, in thinking of an object of beauty to be purposive, there is no *particular* purpose whatsoever with which we can associate the object determinately. Rather, the purposiveness of beauty inheres solely in the object's form, which grounds the subject's judgement that the object is beautiful while leaving the concepts undetermined. Thus, grasping the purposiveness of beauty relies on nothing more than grasping a sense in which it is possible for the object to have a purpose, though there is no particular purpose to be found (thus enabling the mind's "free play"). Cognizing a determinate concept as the purpose of the object in question is not a necessary requirement for conceiving the object as purposive.

Influenced by Kant to a considerable extent,<sup>16</sup> Schopenhauer discusses the purposiveness of an object in two aspects.<sup>17</sup> First, an object has the *inner purposiveness* which shows an agreement among all of its parts, and second, it has the *external purposiveness* which shows an organic relation between its individual parts and nature as a whole.<sup>18</sup> There is a consensus between Schopenhauer's notion of purposiveness and [K1], namely, that the causality which defines purposiveness concerns the concept of a relation which the object bears, either a part-to-part relation obtained within the object (as for inner purposiveness), or a part-to-whole relation obtained between the object and nature (as for external purposiveness).<sup>19</sup>

[K2] applies to Schopenhauer's notion of purposiveness as well. That is, an object's being purposive can be independent of being represented with respect to a determinate concept regarded as its purpose. This is evident in the case of art. Since it is the *one* universal will that is objectified in the form of Ideas manifested in artworks, the objects as they are cognized through aesthetic contemplation are necessarily coordinated with each other in virtue of their unified nature, that is, manifesting the universal will. Thus, artworks can be regarded as purposive in that they embody the universal will, but since there is no representation of the universal will itself, grasping such purposiveness does not involve representing the object with a particular purpose.

Now, I take *meaningfulness* to be a special species of purposiveness: An object is meaningful if the concept in the causality of its purposiveness is conceived of as the *meaning* of the object. An example might be helpful: When I see a sign which says "Keep Quiet"—say, in a recital hall—I know that it is telling me to keep quiet, or to avoid making noises, within a reasonable range of space where the sign is placed. The sign is thus conceived of as having purpose, namely, to advise (or to urge, depending on how obliged one feels to obey the sign) people to avoid making noises, in just the same way in which a hammer is conceived of as having a purpose of hammering. What can distinguish the sign from the hammer is that the purpose of the sign can additionally be regarded as its meaning. I may consider the sign to be meaningful, if I take it to be a cause of the presence of the concept "keep quiet"<sup>20</sup> in my cognitive state upon looking at the sign. That is, there is a causal connection between the sign and my representation of it with the concept "keep quiet." As an analog of [K1], meaningfulness may be given the following definition:

[M1] Meaningfulness is the causality of a concept as a meaning with regard to its object.

An object is said to be meaningful when it is possible to think of the object in terms of some concept (or concepts) regarded as the meaning of the object. A meaningful object is said to have a *form of meaningfulness*. For example, the form of meaningfulness of a sign might inhere in one's thinking of it in terms of the concepts which it evokes. But just like purposiveness, it is not a necessary requirement for the subject to represent the object with a meaning *in particular* in order to conceive of the object as meaningful. Rather, her thinking of the object as meaningful can rest solely on a sheer possibility of conceiving the object as having a meaning, in which case the object's being meaningful is independent from its being represented with any specified meaning. Put concisely:

[M2] Meaningfulness can exist without representation of a meaning, insofar as its form is derived not from a determinate concept, but only from the possibility of conceiving the object as meaningful.

For Schopenhauer, a (non-musical) artwork may be said to have a form of meaningfulness insofar as there is the causality of meaning grasped by the subject, and moreover, the form of meaningfulness of a (non-musical) artwork *may or may not* involve a representation of meaning. If the subject conceives of the artwork as meaningful because she associates it with a determinate concept, then the form of meaningfulness, cognized as such, is grounded in the representation of its meaning as determined; but if, by contrast, her conceiving of the artwork as meaningful is based solely on the strength of grasping the Idea—which is distinct from any representation—manifested in it, then the form of meaningfulness, cognized as such, is devoid of representations and thus is the *mere form* of meaningfulness.

In the case of music, the object being cognized is first and foremost an object of art and thus has a form of purposiveness. The "purpose" of music is, loosely speaking, to "reveal" the universal will to a subject through her aesthetic contemplation. However, it should be stressed that conceiving of music as purposive (in a Schopenhauerian sense) does not involve the representation of such a purpose, since the universal will that music embodies is metaphysically distinct from representations and unrepresentable with any determinate concepts.<sup>21</sup> The aesthetic judgment that music is "purposive", therefore, is merely grounded in a sense in which there is *something* to be regarded as its purpose, although one could never translate that *something* into any specifiable content without



losing its essence. That is, music in one's aesthetic contemplation is experienced *as if* it has a purpose, and such experience is in virtue of the fact that music has the *mere form* of purposiveness, just as beauty does in a Kantian sense.

Furthermore, music has a form of *meaningfulness* as well. As suggested in [M1], meaningfulness is a special kind of purposiveness, in that the concept involved in the causality of a form of purposiveness can be conceived of as the meaning of the object in question. Music is meaningful, for it is an (unmediated) manifestation of the universal will, the cognition of which via a subject's aesthetic contemplation points to the true knowledge of the world. However, since there is no particular concept with which such meaning can be represented—as the universal will is inexpressible in any other form—the meaningfulness of music is a *mere form*. That is, music is meaningful only in the sense that it is an expression of the universal will, where no representation can be specified. When we conceive of music as meaningful, it is only on the strength of a sheer possibility that the form of meaningfulness through which it is given to us means *something*, though we can never put its meaning into words (or any other form of expression). Music itself *means* nothing but the universal will, and the absence of representations of meaning in music is due to the equally inexpressible nature of what music points to. There cannot be a more explicit illustration of the universal will than how it is manifested in music, for music is the only unmediated expression, a “direct copy,” of the entire will.

#### IV. What the Musical Form Could Mean

I have argued, in light of a Schopenhauerian account of music, that music can be conceived of as the mere form of meaningfulness without representations of any determinate concept as its meaning. What remains is to show how this approach to music follows the spirit of the classic musical formalism sprung from Hanslick's VMS on the one hand, and on the other, how it can account for the possibility as well as the variety of musical meaning, to which I shall turn in this final section.

To be sure, music must be given to us through some form of representation—perhaps in most cases, through a series of sounds—such that we have the kind of aesthetic experience as we do in listening to music. Moreover, what we may conclude from the Schopenhauerian account of music that I've sketched in the previous two sections is that we conceive of music as meaningful in virtue of the fact that its meaningfulness grasped in our aesthetic experience inheres in nothing but a *consciously perceivable structure*. Now I take it that the kind of structure which gives rise to our conceiving of music as meaningful *just is* what a musical formalist would call the “tonally moving form,” broadly construed.<sup>22</sup> After all, the central idea of the formalist approach to music is to focus on the properties that are *intrinsic* to music.<sup>23</sup> Crucially, what is intrinsic to music needs to be distinguished from any of the “extramusical” references (e.g., worldly representations, expressions of feelings and emotions) that are only contingently associated with music depending on the audience's own subjective response.<sup>24</sup> Once the contingencies of our aesthetic experience of music are stripped away, we would be left with music perceived (or cognized) in its pure form of meaningfulness. Just as Schopenhauer describes Ideas in a Platonic sense as “the original unchanging forms and properties of all natural bodies” (*WWR* 169), musical formalists also have a general Platonist conviction that our cognitive perception of music is rooted in perceiving its form, which is constituted in the internal relations of a musical structure.<sup>25</sup> The reason we find music to be meaningful in our aesthetic experience is that there is the consciously perceivable structure in music that makes possible our conceiving of it as a form of meaningfulness—and indeed, as the *mere form*.

Since a formalist light has been cast upon the Schopenhauerian account of music developed in this paper, it would be remiss of me not to address an expressivist challenge against musical formalism: How could it be the case, given the picture that music in its pure form admits of no representation whatsoever, that we often find music to be *expressive*? Indeed, one of the main concerns for musical formalists has been to explain how the formal properties of music alone may account for its expressive properties.<sup>26</sup>



In fact, Schopenhauer himself anticipates the challenge. However ineffable the universal will or music is in its pure form, there has to be *some* relation between music as such and the series of sounds, say, present in our musical experience in which we grasp music's form of meaningfulness. According to Schopenhauer, the relation that music bears to the worldly representations which we might form of it is "abstract" and "essentially impossible to demonstrate" (*WWR* 257). Attempting to describe the relation directly would be to presuppose the possibility to represent music with determinate concepts, which is immediately defeated by the metaphysical nature of the universal will. Instead, Schopenhauer proceeds by drawing analogies between certain musical features and human acts of willing and feeling. The harmonic structure of music, for instance, reflects the gradation of Ideas. The "ground-bass", or the lower bound in a harmony, represents the lowest level of objectification of the will; the intervals between pitches are parallel to the particular levels of the objectification. The melody resembles the act of willing: the constant departure from and return to the tonic reflects the endless striving of human beings—from desire to satisfaction, and to the formation of yet another desire. Sprightly melodies with brief deviations reveal the rapid transition from desire to satisfaction, whereas slow melodies, where the dissonances take longer time to resolve, are analogous to the delayed and hard-won satisfaction.<sup>27</sup>

However, as Schopenhauer warns us, such analogies can show at best an *indirect* relation between music and representations. Those particular emotions and feelings which might be present in our musical experience are not inherent in music, and our use of emotional terms in describing music is entirely contingent. These analogies concern the *form* of meaningfulness in music, as opposed to some specifiable content as *the* musical meaning. In Schopenhauer's words:

Therefore music does not express this or that particular and definite pleasure, this or that affliction, pain, sorrow, horror, gaiety, merriment, or peace of mind, but joy, pain, sorrow, horror, gaiety, merriment, peace of mind *themselves*, to a certain extent in the abstract, their essential nature, without any accessories, and so also without the motives for them. Nevertheless, we understand them perfectly in this extracted quintessence (*WWR* 261; emphasis in the original).

That is, music is *structurally* analogous to our emotional states, but the perceivable similarities pertain only to certain musical patterns and the general ways in which we *will*,<sup>28</sup> but not to any of our particular emotions or feelings.<sup>29</sup> Music *means*, yet it means abstractly, essentially, and universally.

Although music as such has no musical meaning *in particular*, it is precisely the structural analogy between the musical form and our emotional states that explains why music is often found to have an expressive quality, i.e., that which motivates the expressionist theories of music.<sup>30</sup> The expressiveness of music is given by the possibility of ascribing music with meaningful content, which we might take it to "express," and such possibility is grounded in its form of meaningfulness that retains a structure homologous to the specific expressions.

Moreover, the mere form of meaningfulness, which music essentially is, accounts for not just the *possibility* but also the *varieties* of musical meaning ascribable to it. Recall that the nature of music is twofold: It is both the true and profound knowledge of world and a universal expression of our own acts of willing. Schopenhauer's analogies demonstrate the fact that we can perceive certain resemblances between musical patterns and our subjective states of willing and feeling and whereby we might associate music with those subjective content. Such resemblances are revealed to us by the form of meaningfulness in music through our aesthetic contemplation of it. Music embodies in its form those patterns that are structurally analogous to our desire, frustration, and fulfillment. On the other hand, as a direct manifestation of the universal will, music also reveals to us the essence of the world as well as of the entire endeavor of humankind. Therefore, in appreciating music as the mere form of meaningfulness, we are conceiving of the shared essence—between music and us as well as between music and the entire world—which makes the varieties of musical meaning possible.<sup>31</sup>

## V. Conclusion

In this paper, I have developed what I take to be *Schopenhauerian musical formalism* and proposed a notion of music as *the mere form of meaningfulness*. I have first presented Schopenhauer's account of music within his more general metaphysical framework. After explicating the notion of meaningfulness with inspirations drawn from a Kantian formulation of purposiveness, I have shown that, in light of Schopenhauer, music is purposive as an art and meaningful as a direct manifestation of the universal will. Given the unrepresentable nature of the will, I have further argued that music is construed as the mere form of meaningfulness without a representation of meaning. Nevertheless, as I have demonstrated in the final section, it is precisely music's mere form of meaningfulness which gives rise to its infinite potential to be ascribed with a variety of musical meaning.

*The University of Texas at Austin, USA*

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> See Rothfarb 167–220 for a helpful survey of different paths of the formalist approaches to music, beginning with the influence from Kant in the 1790s and ending with Volkelt in the early 1900s.
- <sup>2</sup> According to Alpers, VMS is so influential to contemporary philosophical discussions of music that the formalism Hanslick sketched there may be regarded as a template with which other views of music can be compared and contrasted (“Formalism and Beyond” 257).
- <sup>3</sup> See Alpers 254–275 for an insightful analysis of this trend. Also see Sreckovic 113–134 for a critical discussion of how Hanslick's musical formalism should be interpreted.
- <sup>4</sup> A more literal translation of Hanslick's phrase “Tönend bewegte Formen” would be “sounding moving forms” (see Rothfarb 169), which is more evocative of the connection between music's form and its sonic properties. Also see Scruton 353, where it is translated as “forms moved through sounding.”
- <sup>5</sup> Kivy moves to what he calls the “enhanced formalism,” due to the narrowness of Hanslick's original approach. See Alpers “What Should One Expect from a Philosophy of Music Education?” (215–242) for an explication of enhanced formalism as well as other versions of the view.
- <sup>6</sup> Schopenhauer's ideas was “exploited by enthusiastic admirers and fanatical converts.” (See Mann 374) Also see Franklin *The Idea of Music: Schoenberg and Others* for an investigation of Schopenhauer's influence on Richard Strauss, Mahler, and Schoenberg.
- <sup>7</sup> Schopenhauer's remarks on music take up surprising little space in his otherwise lengthy corpus. See Goehr 200–228 for an insightful discussion of the limits of Schopenhauer's philosophy of music.
- <sup>8</sup> The notion of the universal will shall be made explicit in section II.
- <sup>9</sup> References of Schopenhauer in this paper are to *The World as Will and Representation*, Vols. I and II, translated by E. F. J. Payne, New York: Dover Publications (1969). The original work was published in 1818 (dated 1819). Abbreviated as “*WWR*” hereafter.
- <sup>10</sup> Cf. Schopenhauer *WWR* 164–165.
- <sup>11</sup> See Schopenhauer *WWR* 257. Cf. Schopenhauer *WWR* 195–212.
- <sup>12</sup> Cf. Schopenhauer *WWR* 195–200, 212–213.
- <sup>13</sup> Cf. Schopenhauer *WWR* 255–257.
- <sup>14</sup> Disclosure: I don't mean to offer a substantial reading of Kant's views about aesthetics; rather, my main focus here is on how he derives the notion of purposiveness and uses it in a way to characterize what beauty is. My formulation of meaningfulness in the case of music may be thought of as an analog: music relates to the notion of meaningfulness just as beauty relates to the notion of purposiveness.
- <sup>15</sup> References are to Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, edited by Paul Guyer, translated by Eric Matthews, Cambridge University Press (2000) with the indicated Academy edition pagination.
- <sup>16</sup> Though there is the appendix to the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* entitled “Criticism of the Kantian Philosophy,” Schopenhauer himself has stated that his philosophy is the natural continuation and completion of Kant's. See Schopenhauer *WWR* vi. Also, Schopenhauer holds Kant's aesthetic theory

for high praise, claiming that “The *Transcendental Aesthetic* is a work of such merit that it alone would be sufficient to immortalize the name of Kant” (Schopenhauer *WWR* 437).

<sup>17</sup> Payne translates the term as “suitability” or “appropriateness,” though in the Cambridge edition (eds. Judith Norman, Alistair Welchman, and Christopher Janaway), it is translated as “purposiveness” in agreement with Guyer’s edition of Kant’s *Critique*. I will stick to “purposiveness” for clarity.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Schopenhauer *WWR* 153–158.

<sup>19</sup> I use the term “causality” with regard to Schopenhauer’s *Principle of Sufficient Reason*. Schopenhauer argues that the principle is derived from four different ground–consequent relations—what he calls the four ‘roots’ of the principle—with respect to four classes of representations: empirical objects, abstract concepts, pure intuitions (i.e. space and time), and the subject of willing. (See *Schopenhauer: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason and Other Writings*). Rather than just denoting the law of cause and effect as applied only to the first class of representations, the term “causality” used in this paper refers to the general relationship of any representation to what grounds it. The causality in the definition of purposiveness, for example, concerns the ground–consequent relation of an object to an abstract concept regarded as its purpose or end.

<sup>20</sup> Grasping the sign ‘Keep Quiet’ might involve several concepts, e.g., “quietness” “keeping” (presumably some characterization of behavior), but this does not affect the main arguments that such concepts involved are (or at least could be) determinate.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Schopenhauer *WWR* 255–257. In fact, Schopenhauer denies that concept could be undetermined at all (this is in contrast with Kant; see, e.g., Kant 5:341) and claims that concepts are “entirely exhausted by their definitions” (Schopenhauer *WWR* 260). He also refers to concepts as “representations of representations,” since they are abstracted from the first class of representations, i.e., the empirical objects (cf. *Schopenhauer: On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason and Other Writings* §27).

<sup>22</sup> What I intend by saying “broadly construed” is to suggest that formalists may understand musical form to refer to not only those “tone-related” features of music, such as harmonies and melodies, but other musical features as well, including but not limited to musical frameworks (aria, cantata, sonata, etc.), musical shape (the contour of melody, the degree of fluctuation and intensity of dynamic elements, etc.), and musical design (the organization of musical elements such as harmony, melody, rhythm, timbre, etc.). See e.g., Smith (20–38) and Kamp, *Formalism and Expressivism in the Aesthetics of Music*, for helpful surveys of a wide range of musical formalist views.

<sup>23</sup> Given our Schopenhauerian framework, a more precise formulation would be to say that the focus of musical formalism is given to properties that are *intrinsic to the (presumably sonic) representations which we formed of music*.

<sup>24</sup> See, e.g., Smith: “a musical formalist must say, at a bare minimum, that “musical form” is whatever is in music itself as distinct from whatever is only causally or contingently associated with music” (22), and Kivy, whose (enhanced) musical formalism is intended to explain the core meaningfulness of “music alone,” without prejudice to other music-associated kinds of meaningfulness (see his *Music Alone*).

<sup>25</sup> The point is made explicitly by Smith: “Without the form of X, there can be no cognitive awareness of X as X” (22).

<sup>26</sup> Detailed discussion of this topic can be found in, e.g., Kivy (*Sound Sentiment and Music Alone*), Alperson (“The Philosophy of Music: Formalism and Beyond,” 254–275), Smith (“How to Expand Musical Formalism,” 22–28), and Kamp (*Formalism and Expressivism in the Aesthetics of Music*).

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Schopenhauer *WWR* 257–261.

<sup>28</sup> I use the verb “will” in a Schopenhauerian sense, in that human beings are always subject to the endless force of the universal will and are always in the cycle of wanting, desiring, fulfilling, and frustrating.

<sup>29</sup> Langer articulates a similar point in her *Philosophy in a New Key*, arguing that music has its emotional significance only *symbolically*: “Music is not the cause or the cure of feelings, but their *logical expression*...” (176).

<sup>30</sup> See Kamp 45–74 for a helpful survey of expressivist theories of music.

<sup>31</sup> There seems to be a similar idea embedded in Hanslick’s original formalist thoughts about music. In a discussion of the final paragraph of Hanslick’s *VMS* (which got deleted after the third edition), Sousa provides the following, what he takes to be an “internally consistent,” reading: “music evokes the sentiment of union with infinity, partly because we can (figuratively) hear the cosmos mirrored in the music, and such representational power is itself a result of a set of universal principles that underlie ‘musical discourse’” (215), though he argues that this paragraph is inconsistent with the rest of Hanslick’s argument. See Sousa 211–229.

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# The Jewish Tradition and its Science of the Soul

SAMUEL BENDECK SOTILLOS

The Jewish tradition is the oldest of the three Abrahamic monotheisms, yet many remain unaware that Judaism, like other world religions, offers a complete and fully integrated psychology. Due to the dominance (and limitations) of the modern discipline as practiced in the West today, other ways of fathoming the human psyche – based on the world’s spiritual traditions – have been largely neglected or dismissed. By reclaiming a true “science of the soul,” genuinely holistic modes of knowing and healing – which recognize that a person comprises Spirit, soul, and body – can be made available to those who are looking for more effective ways to tackle the grave mental health crisis we face today. This essay will explore the unique contribution that Jewish mysticism, in particular, can make in helping us to better understand who we are *sub specie aeternitatis* (‘under the aspect of eternity’).

Each of the world’s religions contains both an exoteric and esoteric dimension yet, at the heart of them all, can be found a unanimous affirmation of the Absolute. It is through the Kabbalah and Hasidism, the mystical dimensions of Judaism, that its most profound contribution to the understanding of the human psyche is apparent. Gershom Scholem (1897–1982), the preeminent scholar of Jewish mysticism, explains how this tradition can be interpreted in psychological terms: “[T]he secrets of the divine realm are presented [as] mystical psychology.”<sup>1</sup>

The term Kabbalah is derived from *qabbal*, meaning “to receive,” yet it also signifies “to welcome” and “to accept,” referring to the seeker who is open to receive divine revelation. The Hebrew word *qabbâlâ* also means “tradition,” associated with an uninterrupted “chain” (Hebrew: *shelsheleth*) of transmission that unifies the present to the past, and which continues into the future. The Kabbalistic perspective is founded on our capacity for transcendent knowledge and the ability to enter the spiritual world, through which we can be sanctified and united to the Absolute (*Ayin*). The role of wisdom (*hokhmah*) is essential in understanding the human condition – that is, discerning the intermediary realm of the soul and what lies beyond it. Accordingly, “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament” (Daniel 12:3) and “[W]isdom giveth life to them that have it” (Ecclesiastes 7:12).

Jewish mysticism distinguishes between the revealed and hidden aspects of the Divine, known as “the Infinite” (*Ein Sof*). It is important to emphasize that everything contained in the mystical dimension of Judaism is to be found within the hidden meaning of the Torah:

Woe to [those] who look upon the Torah as simply tales pertaining to things of the world, seeing thus only the outer garment. But [those] whose gaze penetrates to the very Torah, happy are they. Just as wine must be in a jar to keep, so the Torah must be contained in an outer garment. That garment is made up of the tales and stories; but we, we are bound to penetrate beyond.<sup>2</sup>

So it is with the Torah; the innermost dimension of its truth can only be known through the exoteric or formal structure of the faith. The Zohar explains that “only through the disclosed can a man reach the undisclosed.”<sup>3</sup> Within Jewish mysticism, the spiritual guide (*Zaddik*) has become a living expres-

sion of the Torah and its innermost meaning. For this reason, a disciple of a celebrated saint has said: “I did not go to the ‘Maggid’ of Meseritz to learn Torah from him but to watch him tie his boot-laces.”<sup>4</sup>

The Kabbalah is no different from most mystical traditions, in that it has, in large part, been transmitted orally from master to disciple, but its origins are divine. The difficulty of writing down esoteric teachings has been expressed by many. Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534–1572) writes:

It is impossible, because all things are interrelated. I can hardly open my mouth to speak without feeling as though the sea burst its dams and overflowed. How then shall I express what my soul has received, and how can I put it down in a book?<sup>5</sup>

### Religion and its Integrative Psychology

It needs to be said that while all religions contain a “science of the soul,” it would be an error to reduce religious phenomena to mere psychology. They are much more than this, as they transcend the realm of the human psyche and allow access to what is higher than it. If the religions were to be reduced to something less than what they really are, their transpersonal modes of knowing and healing would be overlooked. To illuminate integrative psychology within the Jewish tradition is not to reduce it to a psychological system as such.

The rupture between mind and body, that is foundational to mainstream psychology, reduces all human experience to the private, subjective realm. Yet, the spiritual psychologies found across humanity’s diverse cultures insist on the *objective* nature of reality. Within Jewish mysticism, well-being is viewed in its totality and seeks to integrate all aspects of the individual. As Leo Schaya (1916–1985) notes:

The whole of existence ... is the expression of the one reality, that is to say the totality of its aspects, manifestable and manifested, in the midst of its very infinity. Things are no more than symbolic “veils” of their divine essence or, in a more immediate sense, of its ontological aspects; these aspects are the eternal archetypes of all that is created.<sup>6</sup>

### Self and Cosmos

Across the diverse cosmologies of the world, it is recognized that the universe consists of a hierarchy of ontological degrees, from the most basic elements to the most complex forms of life. As each human being is considered a cosmos in miniature (or *microcosm*), all levels of reality exist both within and outside of the individual being, and are unified in the Absolute. It is written in the Zohar:

[A]s man’s body consists of members and parts of various ranks all acting and reacting upon each other so as to form one organism, so does the world at large consist of a hierarchy of created things, which when they properly act and react upon each together form literally one organic body.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, each higher level of reality contains the lower levels, which is confirmed in the Zohar: “Upper and lower, from the first mystic point up to the furthest removed of all the stages. They are all coverings one to another.”<sup>8</sup> The communion between all phenomena is also recognized, as Spanish Kabbalist Moses de León (c. 1240–1305) discerned: “Everything is linked with everything else down to the lowest ring on the chain, and the true essence of God is above as well as below, in the heavens and on the earth, and nothing exists outside of Him.”<sup>9</sup>

The goal for each human being requires both horizontal and vertical integration. According to the Zohar, each person is to “achieve harmony, peace and union both above and below.”<sup>10</sup> The existence of multiple levels of reality does not detract from the Divine Unity, which Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav (1772–1810) speaks to: “All things have one root.”<sup>11</sup> The core of all Abrahamic monotheisms is a recognition of Divine Unity, which the Jewish tradition affirms in the famous verse from Deuteronomy, recited daily by observant Jews as the *Shema*: “Hear, O Israel, YHVH, our god, YHVH is One” (6:4).



### Person: Spirit, soul, and body

The “science of the soul,” informed by Jewish psychology upholds the belief that the human being is a composite of Spirit, soul, and body. This is referenced in Genesis: “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (2:7). Each human, according to the Jewish tradition, consists of *neshamah*, *ruah*, and *nefesh*. Our higher soul (*neshamah*) longs for its return to the Spirit in this terrestrial sojourn, while our reasoning soul (*ruah*) acts as an intermediary between the upper and lower realms, concerning itself with what is good and evil, while the animal soul (*nefesh*), the lower part, is linked to instincts and bodily cravings. The Jewish mystical tradition explains: “These three grades are harmoniously combined in those men who have the good fortune to render service to their Master.”<sup>12</sup> It needs to be kept in mind that the mystical tradition also speaks of a higher soul, known as the “supernal soul which ... is the soul of all souls.”<sup>13</sup>

The human body is viewed as sacred, for we were created in the “image of God” (Genesis 1:26–27) and it is the “Holy of Holies,” as each constituent part corresponds to a higher degree of reality. The sacred significance of the human body was recognized by an anonymous disciple of Abraham Abulafia (1240–c. 1291), who said that the “Kabbalistic way, or method, consists, first of all, in the cleansing of the body itself, for the bodily is symbolic of the spiritual.”<sup>14</sup> The Zohar reminds us of this: “after the supernal pattern, each limb correspond[s] to something in the scheme of Wisdom.”<sup>15</sup>

The “Body of the King” is the macrocosmic aspect of the human archetype of Principal Man (*Adam Qadmon*) or Transcendent Man (*Adam ilaah*), who discloses Himself to us. Numeration, or *Sefirah*, pertains to the ontological determination of the Divine. The ten *Sefirot*, in descending order, are: Crown (*Keter*), Wisdom (*Hokhmah*), and Intelligence (*Binah*), symbolizing the “threefold Head” of the “King”; followed by Grace (*Hesed*) and Judgment (*Din*), the “Right Arm” and “Left Arm”; then Beauty (*Tiferet*), the “Heart”; followed by Victory (*Netsah*) and Majesty (*Hod*), forming the “Right Thigh” and “Left Thigh”; the Foundation (*Yesod*), the “Reproductive Organ”; and the Kingdom (*Malkhut*) of God, the “Feet,” His Immanence or Presence (*Shekhinah*). While each human being has a unique archetype that corresponds to one of the *Sefirah*, all of them are present within each human soul. The creation of human beings is considered a divine descent, insofar as each person is created in the “image of God” (Genesis 1:26–27), who is at once transcendent and immanent.

### Mind-Body Unity

Rabbi Dov Baer of Mezritch (1704–1772) points out the intimate relationship between the psycho-physical and the spiritual dimension as follows: “When one makes a tiny hole in the body, one makes a big hole in the soul.”<sup>16</sup> For example, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935) also sees this unity when he remarks that “melancholy ... spread[s] as a malignant disease throughout the body and spirit.”<sup>17</sup> The intermediary realm of the human psyche is, at its lower reaches, more closely identified with the body and, at its apex, tantamount to the Spirit, although it continually vacillates between these poles. The soul’s proximity to the Spirit is captured in the Hasidic teaching: “God is even closer to the universe and to man than the soul is to the body.”<sup>18</sup>

Our cognition can act as support to the spiritual path when rooted in a sacred ambience. This is attested to in Jewish scripture: “As he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). This insight is also framed as “A man is shown in a dream only what is suggested by his own thoughts.”<sup>19</sup> Across the religions there are modes of knowledge, with corresponding levels of reality, by which one can realize ultimate reality. Moses Maimonides (1138–1204) acknowledges that to be is to know: “By wisdom we understand the consciousness of self ... the subject and the object of that consciousness are undoubtedly identical.”<sup>20</sup> Our transpersonal identity in the true self is contained in the non-dual affirmation “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 3:14). How this applies to cognition is indicated in the following: “The thought of man is his being; he who thinks of the upper world is in it.”<sup>21</sup> Both a

horizontal and vertical understanding of existence are needed to fully grasp the nuances of the human psyche, yet mainstream psychology, for the most part, confines itself to a purely secular outlook.

Within the Jewish mystical tradition, there are methods of assessing well-being that take into account Spirit, soul, and body. Much more can be revealed about a person from such a holistic perspective, as the Zohar observes, than from a standard test for assessing mental health; for example: “His eyes do not sparkle even when he is joyful.”<sup>22</sup> Human faces are also known to divulge significant information: “Their shapes and lineaments reveal to the wise the inner thoughts and propensities of the mind.”<sup>23</sup> Rabbi Nachman instructs: “One’s true face is his mind, which illumines it from within.”<sup>24</sup> Non-verbal communication through a person’s general appearance and behavior can, in all of its variety, reveal an unspoken language that words cannot always capture. As Rabbi Kook observes:

One can recognize the anxiety that comes through in marks on the face, in gestures, in the voice, in behavior, in the handwriting, in the manner of communication, in speech, and especially in the style of writing, in the way one develops thoughts and arranges them. [The] imprint [will] be discernible to those who look with clear eyes.<sup>25</sup>

### Individual and Divine Intellect

This process requires restoring the individual intellect (*sekhel*) to its rightful place in the Divine Intellect (*ha-sekhel ha-elohi*). The statement in Genesis that “God created man in his own image” (1:27) suggests that the Divine has endowed each person with an intellect to know themselves and the created order. Maimonides observes: “God is the *intellectus*.”<sup>26</sup> As Rabbi Isaac of Acre (1250–1350) reminds us, the human soul “will cleave to the divine intellect, and it will cleave to her ... and she and the intellect become one entity, as if somebody pours out a jug of water into a running well, that all becomes one.”<sup>27</sup> Rabbi Abraham Abulafia describes not only the powerful role of the intellect in our spiritual life but also its profound relationship to the human psyche:

It is appropriate that the intellect that perfects the soul will do so in all its aspects.... And the lover and the bride are like the person who desires and the one that is desired and their common denominator is the desire ... the soul loves the intellect because it is emanating upon it its light, brilliance and splendor, so that it [the soul] is receiving from it a great delight, because it sees by it [by means of the soul] all the existents and that there is nothing among them [i.e. the existences] that is similar, equal, or comparable to it, since all beauty is beneath its beauty, and all degrees are beneath its degree and all delights are beneath its delight. This is why it [the intellect] is to be loved alone, more than any [other] beloved, by the soul, because of itself. Likewise the intellect sees and gazes upon all the creatures but sees none which is more beautiful than it, and worthwhile of a degree and delight [greater] than the perfect soul of man, which knows its degree and beauty and essence, since it [the soul] is the single created form which is connected to this low matter. Those are the paths of love, affection and desire between the intellect and the soul.<sup>28</sup>

The Divine Intellect will then dwell in its proper abode, at the spiritual core of the human being, where it becomes the “eye of the heart” (*ein ha-lev*): “In the hearts of all that are wise-hearted, I have put wisdom” (Exodus 31:6). When the “eye of the heart” is awakened in us, we are guided by the divine Light to things as they are. The supernal source of all light, including what makes vision possible, is disclosed here: “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light” (Genesis 1:3). Wisdom (*hokhmah*) is the solution to all oppositions, as the Psalms say, even “darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee” (139:12). By resorting to the transpersonal source of vision, we can honor our sacred pact to live in accordance with the sacred: “See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil ... choose life, that thou may live” (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19).

### Integrating the Psyche

It is by engaging in spiritual practices, as revealed through the traditional doctrines and methods of the religions, that we can transform our lower impulses and integrate them into what is higher. A

spiritual battle is said to be waged within the heart of each human being. In the Jewish tradition, it is known as “the war of the instinct” (*milhemet ha-yetzer*) or “the battle between instincts” (*milhemet ha-yetzarim*). Rabbi Nachman writes: “Within [each person] are all the warring nations.”<sup>29</sup> He illuminates the intermediary realm of the human psyche, both in its lower and higher dimensions as they connect to the Spirit: “In truth, the one thing man is afraid of is within himself, and the one thing he craves is within himself.”<sup>30</sup> Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto (1707–1746) observes that “The Highest Wisdom decreed that man should consist of two opposites ... in a constant state of battle.”<sup>31</sup> Domination over oneself is necessary for the spiritual path. Regarding troubling thoughts, Rabbi Nachman notes: “Do what you must, and disregard these thoughts completely.”<sup>32</sup> Pertaining to lustful thoughts, Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polonne (1710–1784) advises that a person “should understand that if he has this desire, merely because of the single holy spark that is there, how much greater will be his delight if he attaches himself to the Source of this delight.”<sup>33</sup>

The tetragrammaton YHVH signifies the sacred name of God in the Jewish tradition. Its mystical dimension speaks of unitive adhesion (*devekuth*) or union (*yihud*) with the Absolute (*Ayin*), which can be realized through remembrance and invocation of the Divine Name (a practice found in all spiritual traditions): “YHVH is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all them that call upon Him in truth” (Psalms 145:18), and “Whosoever shall call on the Name of YHVH shall be saved” (2:32).

### Integral Transformation

A prominent teaching in the world’s religions is found in the injunction to *die before you die*. This alchemical and transformative psycho-spiritual process consisting of three degrees of purification, expansion, and union is central to all forms of the “science of the soul” as it reoccurs in a myriad of diverse counsel throughout the spiritual traditions, which all convey the same message. Within the Jewish tradition, it is known as the “cessation or annihilation of existence” (*bittul ha-yesh*); by implication, in the Absolute (*Ayin*).

It is in becoming empty of everything except the Divine—“Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high” (Isaiah 32:15)—that we can realize the fullness of the human condition, our true identity in the human archetype of Principal Man (*Adam Qadmon*) or Transcendent Man (*Adam ilaah*). The integration of our psycho-physical elements into the Spirit must be done (seeing as we are told to love God) “with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might” (Deuteronomy 6:5).

Jewish mysticism according to the Zohar is an invitation to realize our true identity in the Divine, and to see the entire cosmos as a sacred disclosure: “O, ye terrestrial beings who are sunk deep in slumber, awake!”<sup>34</sup> Baal Shem Tov, the “Master of the Divine Name” (Israel ben Eliezer, 1698–1760), provides a parable describing the spiritual seeker:

A king had built a glorious palace full of corridors and partitions, but he himself lived in the innermost room. When the palace was completed and his servants came to pay him homage, they found that they could not approach the king because of the devious maze. While they stood and wondered, the king’s son came and showed them that those were not real partitions, but only magical illusions, and that the king, in truth, was easily accessible. Push forward bravely and you shall find no obstacle.<sup>35</sup>

The human being is called to “Lift up your eyes on high and behold who has created these [things]” (Isaiah 40:26); however, we cannot enact the Psalmist’s injunction to “take off the veil from mine eyes...” (119:18) without first adhering to an authentic spiritual form. The veil exists for the protection of the person and cannot be lifted prematurely without doing harm, and this is taught in many of the world’s sacred scriptures. Therefore, religious and spiritual traditions caution against accessing altered states of consciousness as ends in themselves, or without preparation under the aegis of a qualified guide. Rabbi Luzzatto remarks: “It is obvious ... that it is not appropriate for a commoner ... to make use of the King’s scepter. Regarding this, our sages teach ... us, ‘He who makes use of the

Crown will pass away.”<sup>36</sup> Likewise, Rabbi Nachman warns about seeking such experiences: “Imagine that you would constantly [experience] all that we know about the [spiritual] world. ... If you [could], it would be ... impossible for you to endure life.”<sup>37</sup> We are reminded of the words of Rabbi Luzzatto: “Before [people] can reach this [state], they need much guidance ... each one according to his degree of preparation.”<sup>38</sup>

### Cosmic Binaries: Male and Female

The manifestation of the cosmos exists as a coincidence of opposites consisting of binaries, such as masculine and feminine. Commenting on the biblical verse “And God divided the light from the darkness” (Genesis 1:4), the Zohar explains:

Up to this point the male principle was represented by light and the female by darkness; subsequently they were joined together and made one. The difference by means of which light is distinguished from darkness is one of degree only; both are one in kind, as there is no light without darkness and no darkness without light.<sup>39</sup>

These poles of cosmic manifestation are recognized across religious traditions. To ignore one of the two poles, or to confuse them, would be to subvert the Divine order. According to the Torah: “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:27). Jewish mysticism as found in the Zohar goes as far as to say that “every figure which does not comprise male and female elements is not a true and proper figure.”<sup>40</sup> It emphasizes that God, in masculine form, requires a feminine counterpart: “[T]he King without the Matrona is no king, nor He great nor highly praised.”<sup>41</sup> The traditional understanding of the androgyne confirms that, originally, a human being was neither male nor female, but comprised of both as an archetypal reality found in the Absolute. The Midrash explains: “When the Holy One, Blessed be He, created the first man, He created him androgynous” (Genesis Rabbah 8:1). To be clear, the primordial androgyne exists in the archetypal reality, prior to the created order or the manifest world.

The diverse expressions of the “science of the soul” reflect a common insight into the uniqueness of each human being; namely, that no two persons can be understood in the same way; nor can treatment be provided in exactly the same manner. This also applies to each person’s relationship to the Divine. The Baal Shem observes: “No two persons have the same abilities. Each man should work in the service of God according to his own talents. If one man tries to imitate another, he merely loses his opportunity to do good through his own merit.”<sup>42</sup> Correspondingly, each human soul, regardless of its differences, seeks to be reunited with the Infinite (*Ein Sof*). Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liady (1747–1812) writes that the human soul “naturally ... yearn[s] to separate itself and depart from the body in order to unite with its origin and source ... the fountain-head of all life.”<sup>43</sup> The Zohar teaches that the spiritual path is a gradual process:

At that time, he will first open for them a tiny aperture of light, then another somewhat larger, and so on until he will throw open for them the supernal gates which face on all the four quarters of the world. ... For we know that when a man has been long shut up in darkness it is necessary, on bringing him into the light, first to make for him an opening as small as the eye of a needle, and then one a little larger, and so on gradually until he can endure the full light. ... So, too, a sick man who is recovering cannot be given a full diet all at once, but only gradually.<sup>44</sup>

### Human and Divine Love

Jewish mysticism is filled with images of human love and sexuality that converge in the Absolute (*Ayin*). The contrast between the flesh and the spirit is often expressed as an unreflecting dualism; yet in metaphysics, human love and sexuality are spiritualized and therefore embody a non-dual vision of life. It is written in the Zohar that “the seed [of the Holy One] does not flow save when the Female

is present and their mutual desires are blended into one indissoluble ecstasy.”<sup>45</sup> Elsewhere it is written: “[T]he desire of the female produces a vital spirit and is embraced in the vehemence of the male, so that soul is joined with soul and they are made one, each embraced in the other.”<sup>46</sup> The great Master of Kabbalah Moses Cordovero (1522–1570) writes, “a man must be very careful to behave so that the Shekinah [the female aspect mediated between the Divine and the created order] cleaves always to him and never departs” and adds: “Man stands between the two females, the physical female ... and the Shekinah who stands above him to bless him.”<sup>47</sup>

Asceticism as found in other spiritual traditions is discouraged within Judaism. Rabbi Luzzatto writes of those who practice this path that they “should abstain from whatever is not necessary.”<sup>48</sup> The Baal Shem emphasized that although spiritual discipline is essential, life is to be celebrated: “Without the feeling of love, stimulated by pleasures, it is difficult to feel true love of God.”<sup>49</sup> Having a joyful disposition was considered essential. Rabbi Nachman taught: “Always be joyful, no matter what you are.... With happiness you can give a person life.”<sup>50</sup> He even went so far as to recommend that “If you have no enthusiasm, put on a front. Act enthusiastic, and the feeling will [eventually] become genuine.”<sup>51</sup>

### Preciousness of the Present

In the Jewish tradition, human beings are continually reminded that they must not squander their time, as each moment is another opportunity to connect to and realize the Divine. According to the Zohar: “Man ... whilst in this world, considers not and reflects not what ... he is standing on, and each day as it passes he regards as though it has vanished into nothingness.”<sup>52</sup> Rabbi Simcha Bunam of Peshischa (1765–1827) urges us to engage in every activity with clear intention and awareness: “We should not go about in haste to do a [deed], but we should first consider and observe the proper way and the proper spirit for its performance.”<sup>53</sup> No matter where spiritual practitioners find themselves, according to Rabbi Nachman, we “must ... make sure to set aside a specific time each day to calmly review [our] life.”<sup>54</sup> He adds: “The days pass and are gone, and one finds that he never once had time to really think.... One who does not meditate cannot have wisdom.”<sup>55</sup>

On death and dying, Jewish psychology takes an approach in common with other sacred psychologies. It is recalled that Rabbi Bunam said on his deathbed to his lamenting wife: “Why dost thou weep? All my life has been given ... merely that I might learn [how] to die.”<sup>56</sup> As death approached, Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk (1717–1786) said: “Why should I not rejoice, seeing that I am about to leave this world below, and enter into the higher worlds of eternity?”<sup>57</sup> According to Rabbi Luzzatto: “This world is like the shore and the World to Come like the sea.”<sup>58</sup> The choices that motivated our actions in this world mirror how we die and what is to come: “[I]t is the path taken by man in this world that determines the path of the soul on her departure.”<sup>59</sup>

We need to better understand the distinctions between modern Western psychology, and what we find in cultures that are rooted in the sacred. The timeless wisdom of Judaism and its mystical dimension, especially the Kabbalah and Hasidism—along with their psychological applications—have been neglected for far too long. Attempts to reconcile the religious traditions of the world, particularly Judaism, with the findings of modern science and psychology are futile, for to do so ignores the fact that each traditional “science of the soul” is rooted in metaphysics and spiritual principles that are integral and complete, – without having to be diminished by the reductionist outlook of mainstream psychology.

Although parallels may be drawn between the wisdom traditions of the world’s great faiths and psychology today, this does not remedy the fundamental problem; which is that this discipline is founded on a profound error that reflects a flawed ontological basis. For this reason, whatever new theories or techniques it may adopt, they will remain vitiated by the expulsion of metaphysics from the study of psychology—a pernicious development that became entrenched in the so-called ‘Enlightenment’ period.



No effective and holistic psychological model can be forged in the absence of a transcendent reality at its center. A true “science of the soul” needs to return to a metaphysical worldview, which is akin to the integral practice of *tikkun olam* (repairing or healing the world) found within the Jewish tradition. In this way, not only the world—but the human psyche on both an individual and collective level—can be restored to full health in the spiritual domain.

California, USA

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Gershom Scholem, “Hasidism: The Last Phase,” in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 341.
- <sup>2</sup> *Zohar: The Book of Splendor: Basic Readings from the Kabbalah*, ed. Gershom Scholem (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1977), p. 96.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Zohar, Vol. 2*, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1931), p. 94.
- <sup>4</sup> Quoted in Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 344.
- <sup>5</sup> Isaac Luria, quoted in Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 254.
- <sup>6</sup> Leo Schaya, “Creation, the Image of God,” in *The Universal Meaning of the Kabbalah*, trans. Nancy Pearson (Secaucus, NJ: University Books, 1971), p. 61.
- <sup>7</sup> *The Zohar, Vol. 2*, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1931), p. 36.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Zohar, Vol. 1*, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1984), p. 84.
- <sup>9</sup> Moses de León, quoted in Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 223.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Zohar, Vol. 3*, trans. Harry Sperling, Maurice Simon, and Paul P. Levertoff (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1984), p. 414.
- <sup>11</sup> Nathan of Nemirov, *Rabbi Nachman’s Wisdom: Shevachay HaRan, Sichos HaRan*, trans. Aryeh Kaplan, ed. Aryeh Rosenfeld (Brooklyn, NY: Breslov Research Institute, 1983), p. 142.
- <sup>12</sup> *The Zohar, Vol. 2*, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1931), p. 280.
- <sup>13</sup> *Zohar: The Book of Splendor: Basic Readings from the Kabbalah*, ed. Gershom Scholem (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1977), p. 45.
- <sup>14</sup> Abraham Abulafia, quoted in Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1974), pp. 153–54.
- <sup>15</sup> *The Zohar, Vol. 2*, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1931), p. 212.
- <sup>16</sup> Rabbi Dov Baer of Mezritch, quoted in Irving Block, “Chabad Psychology and the ‘Benoni’ of ‘Tanya,’” *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (Fall 1963), p. 37.
- <sup>17</sup> Abraham Isaac Kook, “The Lights of Penitence—Chapter 8,” in *Abraham Isaac Kook: The Lights of Penitence, the Moral Principles, Lights of Holiness, Essays, Letters, and Poems*, trans. Ben Zion Bokser (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1978), pp. 66–67.
- <sup>18</sup> Quoted in Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1974), p. 108.
- <sup>19</sup> Berakhot 55b, quoted in *The Babylonian Talmud: Berakhot*, trans. Simon Maurice, ed. Isadore Epstein (London, UK: Soncino Press, 1948), pp. 341–42.
- <sup>20</sup> Moses Maimonides, “On the Attributes of God,” in *The Guide for the Perplexed*, trans. Michael Friedländer (New York, NY: Dover, 1956), p. 74.
- <sup>21</sup> Rabbi Nachman, quoted in Martin Buber, *The Tales of Rabbi Nachman*, trans. Maurice Friedman (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 13.



- <sup>22</sup> *The Zohar*, Vol. 3, trans. Harry Sperling, Maurice Simon, and Paul P. Levertoff (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1984), p. 227.
- <sup>23</sup> *The Zohar*, Vol. 3, trans. Harry Sperling, Maurice Simon, and Paul P. Levertoff (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1984), p. 231.
- <sup>24</sup> Nathan of Nemirov, *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom: Shevachay HaRan, Sichos HaRan*, trans. Aryeh Kaplan, ed. Aryeh Rosenfeld (Brooklyn, NY: Breslov Research Institute, 1983), p. 141.
- <sup>25</sup> Abraham Isaac Kook, "The Lights of Penitence—Chapter 8," in *Abraham Isaac Kook: The Lights of Penitence, the Moral Principles, Lights of Holiness, Essays, Letters, and Poems*, trans. Ben Zion Bokser (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1978), p. 67.
- <sup>26</sup> Moses Maimonides, "On the Terms: The Intellectus, the Intelligens and the Intelligibile," in *The Guide for the Perplexed*, trans. Michael Friedländer (New York, NY: Dover, 1956), p. 100.
- <sup>27</sup> Rabbi Isaac of Acre, quoted in Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 67.
- <sup>28</sup> Abraham Abulafia, quoted in Moshe Idel, "Ta'anug: Erotic Delights from Kabbalah to Hasidism," in *Hidden Intercourse: Eros and Sexuality in the History of Western Esotericism*, eds. Wouter J. Hanegraaff and Jeffrey J. Kripal (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 129.
- <sup>29</sup> Nathan of Nemirov, *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom: Shevachay HaRan, Sichos HaRan*, trans. Aryeh Kaplan, ed. Aryeh Rosenfeld (Brooklyn, NY: Breslov Research Institute, 1983), p. 189.
- <sup>30</sup> Rabbi Nachman, quoted in Martin Buber, *The Tales of Rabbi Nachman*, trans. Maurice Friedman (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 37.
- <sup>31</sup> Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, trans. Aryeh Kaplan (Nanuet, NY: Feldheim Publishers, 1999), p. 45.
- <sup>32</sup> Nathan of Nemirov, *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom: Shevachay HaRan, Sichos HaRan*, trans. Aryeh Kaplan, ed. Aryeh Rosenfeld (Brooklyn, NY: Breslov Research Institute, 1983), p. 177.
- <sup>33</sup> Rabbi Jacob Joseph of Polonne, quoted in Louis Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer* (Oxford, UK: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1993), p. 107.
- <sup>34</sup> *The Zohar*, Vol. 1, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1984), p. 16.
- <sup>35</sup> Baal Shem Tov, quoted in Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism: And Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1995), p. 224.
- <sup>36</sup> Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, trans. Aryeh Kaplan (Nanuet, NY: Feldheim Publishers, 1999), p. 205.
- <sup>37</sup> Nathan of Nemirov, *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom: Shevachay HaRan, Sichos HaRan*, trans. Aryeh Kaplan, ed. Aryeh Rosenfeld (Brooklyn, NY: Breslov Research Institute, 1983), p. 222.
- <sup>38</sup> Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, *The Way of God*, trans. Aryeh Kaplan (Nanuet, NY: Feldheim Publishers, 1999), p. 225.
- <sup>39</sup> *The Zohar*, Vol. 1, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1984), p. 121.
- <sup>40</sup> *The Zohar*, Vol. 1, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1984), p. 177.
- <sup>41</sup> *The Zohar*, Vol. 4, trans. Maurice Simon and Paul P. Levertoff (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1984), p. 334.
- <sup>42</sup> Baal Shem Tov, quoted in *The Hasidic Anthology: Tales and Teachings of the Hasidim*, trans. Louis I. Newman (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1963), p. 158.
- <sup>43</sup> Schneur Zalman of Liady, *Liqutei Amarim: Tanya*, trans. Nissan Mindel (New York, NY: Kehot Publication Society, 1962), p. 113.
- <sup>44</sup> *The Zohar*, Vol. 2, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1931), p. 152.
- <sup>45</sup> *The Zohar*, Vol. 2, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1931), p. 121.
- <sup>46</sup> *The Zohar*, Vol. 1, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1984), p. 286.
- <sup>47</sup> Rabbi Moshe Kordovero, "Attaining the Qualities of Malkut," in *The Palm Tree of Deborah*, ed. Shelomo Alfassa (New York, NY: ISLC, 2009), p. 73.
- <sup>48</sup> Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto, *The Path of the Just*, trans. Yaakov Feldman (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), p. 121.
- <sup>49</sup> Baal Shem Tov, quoted in *The Hasidic Anthology: Tales and Teachings of the Hasidim*, trans. Louis I. Newman (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1963), p. 137.
- <sup>50</sup> Nathan of Nemirov, *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom: Shevachay HaRan, Sichos HaRan*, trans. Aryeh Kaplan, ed. Aryeh Rosenfeld (Brooklyn, NY: Breslov Research Institute, 1983), p. 148.
- <sup>51</sup> Nathan of Nemirov, *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom: Shevachay HaRan, Sichos HaRan*, trans. Aryeh Kaplan, ed. Aryeh Rosenfeld (Brooklyn, NY: Breslov Research Institute, 1983), p. 179.

- <sup>52</sup> *The Zohar, Vol. 1*, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1984), p. 323.
- <sup>53</sup> Rabbi Bunam, quoted in *The Hasidic Anthology: Tales and Teachings of the Hasidim*, trans. Louis I. Newman (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1963), p. 267.
- <sup>54</sup> Nathan of Nemirov, *Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom: Shevachay HaRan, Sichos HaRan*, trans. Aryeh Kaplan, ed. Aryeh Rosenfeld (Brooklyn, NY: Breslov Research Institute, 1983), p. 151.
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- <sup>56</sup> Rabbi Bunam, quoted in *The Hasidic Anthology: Tales and Teachings of the Hasidim*, trans. Louis I. Newman (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1963), p. 70.
- <sup>57</sup> Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk, quoted in *The Hasidic Anthology: Tales and Teachings of the Hasidim*, trans. Louis I. Newman (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1963), p. 70.
- <sup>58</sup> Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto, *The Path of the Just*, trans. Yaakov Feldman (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1996), p. 18.
- <sup>59</sup> *The Zohar, Vol. 1*, trans. Harry Sperling and Maurice Simon (New York, NY: Soncino Press, 1984), p. 324.

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# The Yin-Yang Belief Concatenation and Akrasia

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ZHIYAO MA

**Abstract:** Epistemic akrasia describes a non-ideal situation in which an agent holds a belief like, “P, but my evidence does not support P.” It is controversial whether it is possible or rational to hold such an akratic belief. In this paper, I attempt to explain akratic beliefs in terms of an updated notion of yin and yang in Chinese philosophy. Epistemologists evaluate akratic beliefs as if they are the end of an inquiry or inference. Drawing from the updated notion of yin/yang in which yin is conceived as receptivity and yang is conceived as direct purpose (or impulsion), an akratic belief is shown to be an unstable, intermediate temporal belief state in the middle of the entire process. It is not the end result, rather, it is a transitional episode of an inquiry or inference in progress. Hence, it is the entire process to be evaluated rather than the temporal belief state in the middle of the process. Given this notion of yin/yang, an akratic belief illustrates that an agent is open-minded in the sense that she is receptive to evidence, which motivates her to proceed through further investigation. Ultimately, the so-called akratic beliefs are segments of a diachronic process of belief concatenation.

*Keywords:* yin, yang, complementary, belief, inference, akrasia

## I. Epistemic Akrasia

If one holds a belief that she thinks her evidence does not support, her belief is akratic. Some philosophers are concerned with the possibility of holding such a belief.<sup>1</sup> For instance, in “Moore’s Paradox and Akratic Belief”, Eugene Chislenko (2016) argues that akratic belief is intuitively possible because it has the identical form of Moore’s paradox. He describes a “belief-akratic-paradoxical assertion” as follows: I believe P, but I should not believe it. Such an assertion seems to have the similar formulation to Moore’s paradox, and it is problematic when asserted in the first-person present tense. However, Chislenko argues that for an agent to be epistemic akrasia, the agent only needs to have one belief P and the other belief that one should not believe P. The belief-akratic-paradoxical belief is the third belief that one has after the first two beliefs. An akratic belief does not require the third belief. Hence, it is possible to hold an akratic belief.

Borgoni (2014) argues for the possibility of akratic belief by offering two kinds of cases of epistemic akrasia with different types of evidence: undercutting evidence and rebutting evidence. Undercutting evidence undermines the supporting relationship between the initial evidence and belief. Rebutting evidence is simply against the initial belief. Borgoni says, “Beliefs can respond incorrectly to the evidence or even become insensitive to it.” (2014, p. 5) Therefore, Borgoni holds that epistemic akrasia is at least psychologically possible.

Others are concerned with its rationality. Most philosophers take it to be an irrational belief and even give it a constraint, the “Non-Akrasia Constraint”.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, one should not believe that “P, but my evidence does not support P.” Others argue that it could be rational.<sup>3</sup> It is thus controversial whether such an akratic belief is rationally possible. As I argue, the notion of yin and yang can help us understand this phenomenon much deeper. In this paper, I will mainly discuss the following two opposite views about akratic belief.

### *a. The Level-splitting view*

The level-splitting view is the typical argument for rational akratic belief. In “Rational Epistemic Akrasia”, Allen Coates (2012) claims that if epistemic rationality requires that one’s belief is supported by sufficient evidence, people can make falsely rational judgments about their beliefs since they are fallible. Hence, akratic beliefs can be rational if they are based on sufficient reasons. He provides the following example to depict the case of rational epistemic akrasia:

Holmes brings Watson to a crime scene, that the evidence indicates that the butler is guilty, and that Watson uses good reasoning to arrive at that conclusion. In short, Watson rationally believes that the butler did it. But when he tells Holmes of his conclusion and how he arrived at it, Holmes’s only response is, “Your conclusion is irrational.” Since Holmes is a master sleuth, Watson is justified in believing that he is correct: Holmes’s testimony on these matters is very authoritative. But authoritative though he is, he is not infallible, and this is one of the rare occasions in which he is wrong. So when Watson accepts Holmes’s assessment, he accepts a falsehood. Watson, then, may reasonably but wrongly judge that his conclusion is irrational. Therefore, if he nevertheless maintains his belief in the butler’s guilt, both it and his epistemic judgment of it are rational. Yet in holding them both, he is akratic. (Coates, 2012, pp. 2–3)

In this case, Watson has good reasons to believe the conclusion that the butler is guilty. He has good reasons to judge that his conclusion is irrational as well. (Although it is in fact misleading evidence, according to Coates.) Thus, Watson makes a rational false judgment. The reasons that Watson’s akratic belief is rational are as follows:

First, in the example, Watson’s belief is not epistemically blameworthy in that it is supported by sufficient evidence. Secondly, it is not Holmes’s assessment that defeats Watson’s belief. Rather, Watson’s own consideration of his initial evidence lets him judge whether his belief is rational or not. Third, it is possible that Watson holds his belief rationally albeit he considers it irrational. So even if it is irrational to act on that belief, it does not entail that the belief must in fact be irrational.

### *b. Irrational Epistemic Akrasia*

In “Epistemic Akrasia”, Sophie Horowitz (2014) points out that the “level-splitting” view denies the Non-Akrasia Constraint. She illustrates that the view of level-splitting faces some problems by the example of sleepy detective:

Sam is a police detective, working to identify a jewel thief. He knows he has good evidence – out of the many subjects, it will strongly support one of them. Late one night, after hours of cracking codes, and scrutinizing photographs and letters, he finally comes to the conclusion that the thief was Lucy. Sam is quite confident that his evidence points to Lucy’s guilt, and he is quite confident that Lucy committed the crime. In fact, he has accommodated his evidence correctly and his belief are justified. He calls his partner, Alex. “I’ve gone through all the evidence”, Sam says, “and it all points to one person! I’ve found the thief!” But Alex is unimpressed. She replies: “I can tell you’ve been up all night working on this. Nine times out of the last ten, your late-night reasoning has been quite sloppy. You’re always quite confident that you’ve found the culprit, but you’re almost always wrong about what the evidence supports. So your evidence probably doesn’t support Lucy in this case.” Though Sam hadn’t attended to his track-record before, he rationally trusts Alex and believes that she is right – that he is usually wrong about what the evidence supports on occasions similar to this one. (2014, p. 719).

Horowitz claims that it is odd for Sam to hold the belief that “Lucy is the thief and that the evidence does not support that Lucy is the thief”, since the latter sentence just defeats his first-order evidence. Thus, it is uncertain how Sam should treat his first-order evidence. Moreover, even if Lucy is the thief, he forms the true belief merely out of luck. Besides, if Sam thinks that he considers the evidence thoroughly, he might think that his initial belief reduces the reliability of the higher-order evidence, hence the higher-order evidence is misleading. It is problematic for him to make the judgment in this way. In addition, if cases like Sleepy Detective happen again and again, Sam could only examine

whether the process is rational by checking the process itself, so Level-Splitting will face the problem of bootstrapping. Accordingly, for Level-Splitting, it is uncertain how exactly first-order and higher-order evidence affect each other.

Horowitz also points out that it is impossible for one to act rationally on the belief that “Lucy is the thief, and his evidence does not support it.” If Sam follows either of these, he will not have justification for his behavior. So, it is irrational to hold akratic beliefs.

In this paper, I am not going to argue for the views mentioned above, instead I will attempt to show that the whole notion of akratic belief assumes a static view of the epistemic situation, but it is more insightful to take the situation as dynamically involving the changing of belief in the light of further evidence. What has been called akratic belief should instead be viewed as a stage in a dynamic yin/yang process of epistemic discovery. The focus on akrasia ignores this process. Hence, we should stop worrying about how to conceptualize or deny akratic belief and focus instead on the dynamic side of what is going on when philosophers defend or deny the idea of akratic belief.

## II. The updated yin and yang

Before I explain why the concepts of yin and yang can help with the picture of process rationality, let me introduce some relevant background information about the concepts of yin and yang.

The concepts of yin and yang have developed over centuries. For instance, in the Song Dynasty, *Zhou Dunyi* provides his explanation of *yin* and *yang* in his famous work, *Taijitu Shuo*, which combines the conception of *Taiji* (the “Great Ultimate”) with the concepts of motion and rest. His aim is to offer a Neo-Confucianist cosmology, which was criticized and developed by *Zhang Zai*, *Zhu Xi*, and others.<sup>4</sup> According to *Zhu Xi*, *Taiji* is a principle and it divides into two *qi*. These two *qi* stimulate each other, which generates *yin* and *yang*, and even affects the combination of *yin* and *yang*.

This is one of the mainstream of metaphysical explanation of *yin* and *yang* in Chinese history. However, Michael Slote points out that it is a “proto-scientific cosmology”, and that it has been “superseded by more quantitative forms of scientific explanation.” (2018, p.45) He offers an updated conception of yin/yang in which *yin* and *yang* are necessarily coexistent complements rather than opposites. He also emphasizes that yin and yang are mutually dependent or involved. He then goes on to demonstrate how to apply the concepts of *yin* and *yang* to western philosophy.

For instance, he argues that compassion can be explained in terms of *yin* and *yang*. “One element in compassion is a kind of receptivity that makes us immediately acquainted with the inner reality of the other, as when we feel their distress...full receptivity we are describing here entails and is inseparable from the fact that one is motivated to help the other person in a particular way, and this means that one embodies or exemplifies a kind of directed active purpose in that situation.” (2018, pp. 8-9)

The receptivity here is the yin side of compassion, and the direct active purpose is the yang side of compassion. The receptivity, as the yin side, is the process of taking in others’ inner reality. The yang side is “the fact that one is motivated to help the other person in a particular way”, which can be taken as a practical manifestation. For example, if one sees that someone is in pain, one takes in that person’s feelings as his or her inner state, then it provides the motive to help the person ease the pain. That is the direct active purpose. (Even if one might not act, one has the desire to act.)

It seems that receptivity, as defined above, is quite similar to what Paul Bloom called “emotional empathy.” As Bloom puts it, “Empathy is the act of coming to experience the world as you think someone else does.” (2017, p. 16) He then makes the distinction between emotional empathy and cognitive empathy. Accordingly, cognitive empathy refers to our ability to understand that someone is in pain without feeling it ourselves. He also differentiates empathy from compassion by referring to Tania Singer and Olga Klimechki’s work in which compassion is defined as “feelings of warmth, concern and care for the other, as well as a strong motivation to improve the other’s well-being. Compassion is feeling for and not feeling with the other.” (2017, p. 126)



My purpose here is not to argue against Bloom, but it is worth mentioning the difference between receptivity and “emotional empathy”. In “A Larger Yin Yang Philosophy”, Slote (forthcoming) emphasizes that being receptive to the other’s distress includes being receptive to the intentional object of the other’s feelings. As he puts it, “the full (empathic) receptivity we are describing here entails and is inseparable from the fact that one is motivated to help the other person in a particular way, and this means that one embodies or exemplifies a kind of directed purpose or impulse in that situation.” (2018, p. 9) However, it is unclear whether the “emotional empathy” defined by Bloom includes the intentional object of the other’s feelings.

### III. The *yin* and *yang* of belief

So far, I have introduced the updated interpretation of yin/yang, according to which, yin is conceived as receptivity and yang is conceived as direct purpose (or impulsion). In this section, I attempt to explain belief in terms of yin and yang and explore how this interpretation of yin/yang can help us with epistemology, especially with epistemic akrasia.

To delineate the process of belief concatenation in terms of yin/yang, let me introduce the story of Galileo, which exemplifies the yin/yang construction of inference as well.<sup>5</sup>

In ancient times, people noticed darker patches on the Moon’s surface with their naked eyes and tried to explain this. Later the telescope occurred. It allows people to observe the Moon more closely, including Galileo. Galileo observed the patterns of the light and shadow on the Moon and noticed that the shape of the shadow changed over time. The position of the Sun relative to the Moon, similar to how light and shadows change on Earth in relation to holes in the ground. From this, he inferred that there might be craters on the Moon, similar to those on Earth. However, not all astronomers reached the same conclusion despite observing the same phenomenon.

At that time, people had an ordinary background belief that the color of the light and dark varies over time. Why did other astronomers fail to recognize the similarity? After all, they all started with the same goal, to explain the dark patches on the Moon. Galileo was also looking for a plausible answer for the phenomenon. But he was more receptive and sensitive to the information for he was more open-minded. Hence, he paid more attention to all the relevant things, including how the dark and light change on the Moon, and that the Sun’s relation to the Moon varies, the color of the light and dark varies along with it. When the Sun is on one side of the Moon, some places on the Moon become brighter than others. Let’s call this relevant evidence. Galileo received and considered this information, so he was aware that the phenomenon on the Moon might have something to do with the way the Sun is in relation to the Moon. By accepting this proposition, he then was curious to know how these two variations related to each other so that he could update his belief. This motivated him to pay attention to more relevant information. He was curious about it, and he automatically paid attention to all relevant possibilities. Curiosity is a kind of epistemic feeling or emotion, and one of the epistemic virtues that has yin–yang structure. This is because being curious about something entails that one has been already receptive to some relevant information, which is the yin side. Curiosity itself motivates one to do further investigation and pay attention to more information as well, which is the yang side. Hence, by paying attention to all the potential evidence and possibilities, Galileo became more focused, which inspires his creativity, and lets him see the analogy. That is, on Earth, when there is a declivity, if the Sun is on one side of the declivity, the other side of it will be brighter. This is similar to certain phenomenon on Earth. He then drew the inference that it might be because the Moon has craters similar to declivities on Earth and felt confident about his inference. This creative thought comes from his receptivity toward all the possibilities.

The inference chain in the process demonstrates the yin/yang concatenation. Initially, the observation of the dark and light variations on the Moon sparks curiosity. Receptivity to the phenomenon as the yin part motivates Galileo to figure out why. This is the direct purpose or the yang part of it. Consequently, he became attentive to all the relevant possibilities. Subsequently, Galileo noticed an



additional phenomenon: when the Sun's relationship with the Moon changes, the colors of the light and darkness also vary. Once again, his receptivity to this drove him to seek more information, highlighting the connection between yin receptivity and yang motivation in the inference chain. Galileo then noticed the similar phenomenon on Earth and drew the analogy that had not been made before. This kind of focus not only allows him to conceive all the possibilities but also fosters creativity. The receptivity to this new evidence ultimately enables him to draw the conclusion. As is shown in the story, creativity can be regarded as another epistemic virtue here embodying both epistemic receptivity and decisiveness.

In the entire process, Galileo's acceptance of the evidence is the yin side, which allows him to conceive all the possibilities. His willingness to scrutinize all the evidence is the yang side, which allows him to draw the creative inference. Hence, belief involves receptivity to evidence and being willing to use the belief to make further inference.<sup>6</sup> The yin-yang concatenation occurs each time he encounters new pieces of evidence.

The capacity for drawing the conclusion and taking it to be the answer to the question embodies another epistemic virtue, decisiveness. He could not draw the conclusion without epistemic decisiveness. All the information that he had would be debris. He would not be able to connect them and make the inference.<sup>7</sup>

The reason that I bring this story up is because it is similar to the cases of epistemic akrasia in that it manifests the belief concatenation in which the new evidence occurs constantly. The difference between them is that in the cases of epistemic akrasia, the agent has no decisive evidence to draw the final conclusion whereas in the story of Galileo, the whole body of evidence allows him to arrive at the conclusion. I will explain how the analysis of Galileo's story sheds light on epistemic akrasia in the next section. However, for now I intend to discuss more about how belief is related to emotion as well as expound upon the advantages of analyzing epistemic virtues in terms yin-yang.

As mentioned above, the process of Galileo's inference involves epistemic feelings or emotions, such as curiosity and the feeling of confidence. It indicates that the belief formation processes or inferential processes are not purely cognitive processes, and the result belief or conclusion is not purely cognitive state. According to Slote's analysis, belief can be construed as an attitude of acceptance or the feeling of certainty. The feeling of certainty, in this definition, is a kind of epistemic emotion.<sup>8</sup> He also mentions that, in the dictionary, the feeling of confidence<sup>9</sup> is described as a state of "strong belief". If so, then belief can be taken as a positive epistemic emotion toward a proposition.

Belief involves another epistemic emotion, favoring. In Galileo's investigation, he might come across different possible explanations for the phenomenon, but he draws the final conclusion based on his own inference and being able to rule out misleading information. He believes his conclusion over others which means that he favors his conclusion over others. Hence, believing also involves favoring. On the one hand, if someone else doubts Galileo's conclusion, he might want to defend his belief. When he tries to defend a proposition, he is emotionally invested in it. The belief itself provides the motivation to defend.

On the other hand, suppose he is receptive to the new evidence, and he cannot decide if it is misleading so that it can be ruled out or if it supports his original thoughts, which is similar to the cases of akratic belief. How would he react to the new evidence set? Since he is receptive to the combination of the new evidence and the evidence that he already possesses, it naturally generates the motivation to do further investigation to make sure how he should view the new body of evidence, which takes time. Even if the new evidence seems to defeat his first-order evidence, since he is open-minded, he is still willing to consider the opinion that he disagrees with. Open-mindedness as an epistemic virtue has three special features.

First, being open-minded requires not only receptivity but also receptivity to the view that one disagrees with. Secondly, being receptive to the view that one disagrees with is because one respects other's view, especially the view itself. Since epistemic receptivity is an attitude towards the infor-

mation rather than the person who holds the view. It does not involve any value judgment regarding the person. Hence, this open-mindedness is an epistemic virtue rather than ethical virtue.<sup>10</sup> It eliminates the possibility of missing some relevant information because of an ethical value judgment. Thirdly, epistemic receptivity involved in open-mindedness is also an attitude toward one's own beliefs, which connects it with epistemic decisiveness. Since Galileo is open-minded, he is willing to consider the others' views even if he disagrees with them. However, after scrutinizing, he realized that his own inference is more plausible, he then decisively stuck to his conclusion because he respected his own belief. Further investigation or careful scrutinizing takes time. In the cases of epistemic akrasia, the agent does not have time to do further investigation or scrutinize the whole evidence set, so she cannot be as decisive.

Epistemic decisiveness with receptivity can avoid value judgment as well since it is directed toward the evidence and inference. After examining the relevant information, the agent automatically inclines to make the inference and generates the conclusion. It has nothing to do with the announcement of the conclusion or the social status of the agent.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, since receptivity helps us avoid negligence and allows the agent to be willing to scrutinize all the relevant evidence, the agent with decisiveness is then naturally motivated to make the generalizing inference. Hence, such epistemic decisiveness can avoid the personal risk of arriving at the wrong answer because of the value assessment.

There is more to say about epistemic receptivity. As I mentioned previously, yin can be taken as receptivity. Receptivity itself includes yang. For instance, in your inquiry, you can be aware of it because you are receptive to your own life. The receptivity and awareness of your inquiry allow you to be more sensitive to the information. Automatically, you are willing to receive things, so you start to pay attention to the information and environment around you. The willingness is the yang side of receptivity. You then will be aware of the relevant clue. The relevant clue could be your background memory or new information.

There is one more thing to mention before I discuss how this helps with other philosophical issues. There are various definitions of evidence. For example, according to Russellian views, evidence can be understood as sense data that we can conceive immediately. According to evidentialism, perceptual, introspective, memorial, and intuitional experiences can count as evidence.<sup>12</sup> I am not going to discuss the definition of evidence in detail here. I will accept the broader definition for the current purpose. In an inference chain, the receptivity of evidence is the yin part, which motivates the subject to come to a temporary conclusion, the yang part of it. This progress could be repeated again and again.

#### IV. Epistemic Akrasia and Belief Concatenation

Now, let's see how to explain epistemic akrasia based on the concept of yin-yang and why it is more plausible than the views mentioned above. First, let me describe in more detail the belief concatenation extracted from the case of Galileo.

An inference starts with curiosity or a desire to know something. It requires people to be receptive to their own desires or curiosities so that they can be aware of and pay attention to or focus on all the relevant information and the environment around them. This is the process of gathering relevant evidence. In this process, with the help of open-mindedness and sensitivity to all the possibilities, people weigh the evidence, or even filter the evidence so that they can rule out misleading evidence. This process can be called the coalescence of evidence, which is the yin side here. Based on the current evidence, people infer a temporary conclusive belief that is properly supported by the evidence. This exemplifies epistemic decisiveness, which is the yang side. It also involves the yin part in the sense that it entails being receptive to the prior evidence and the temporary conclusive belief could be the evidence for further inference. It involves another yang part as "a directed active purpose" for the belief might arouse the curiosity for further questions, causing the process to restart,

or it might provide a practical motivation for further action. In this process, yin and yang are complementaries and they are dependent on each other. One thing to notice is that the yin doesn't cause the yang; these two are metaphysically mutually dependent and co-exist.

In cases of akratic belief, an agent begins by forming a belief *P* based on first-order evidence and the agent is (at least) confident in *P*.<sup>13</sup> Then someone else gives some additional (or higher-order) evidence. If the additional evidence supports the agent's first-order belief, the agent only needs to examine whether it is reliable. However, in the discussion of akratic belief, such cases are often set aside. The additional evidence is usually called higher-order evidence or second-order evidence in the cases of akratic belief, which is evidence about one's evidence. It has a defeating force if it demonstrates that the first-order belief is the result of a flawed process. This kind of higher-order evidence works as a defeater.

After accepting the new evidence that has a defeating force, the agent might be uncertain about *P*. Now the reasonable task is to examine both first-order and higher-order evidence. This step is what has been almost always left in the stories of epistemic akrasia. It is also in this step that rational delay occurs because it takes time to receive and weigh new evidence and so it takes time to update one's attitude.

In this step, the agent accepts the additional evidence because he or she pays attention to all relevant evidence and tries to conceive all the possibilities. Now the process of coalescence of evidence starts again which takes time. The yin side includes both the acceptance of the new evidence and the process of weighing additional evidence. In the middle of this process, the agent might come to believe that *P* but his or her evidence does not support *P* because he or she might not finish weighing and filtering the evidence. Thus, the agent's belief state might keep changing in the middle of the ongoing process. Hence, the akratic belief is just a description of an episodic belief state in the middle of the process.

When the agent arrives at the conclusion later (maybe with more evidence), the confidence of his or her further belief is yang. Yin and yang work dynamically throughout the process.

Consider the sleepy detective case again. In the first part of the inference, after accepting and weighing the first-order evidence, the detective Sam concludes that Lucy is the thief which is properly based on his first-order evidence. Suppose at this time he is 100% confident about his belief. His certitude (or confidence) of this belief contains the motivation to arrest and interrogate Lucy. This is the stable yin-yang structure of that belief. Before acting, his partner, Alex, tells him that he has been up all night working on this, and his late-night reasoning has often been quite sloppy, which counts as the higher-order evidence. It affects the stable belief state. If Sam is open-minded and receptive to this evidence, he will be willing to start the process of coalescence of the evidence again. That process might last longer than expected. He might need more time to update his attitude.

In the middle of the process, he might come to believe that Lucy is the thief, but his evidence does not support that. The akratic belief that "Lucy is the thief, but my evidence does not support that" is the mere description of Sam's mental state at one point during such a process. Note that this is an unstable, intermediate belief state. Although it is an unstable, intermediate belief state, it still involves the yin-yang structure.

In such a situation, suppose the belief that Lucy is the thief could be one possible conclusion in the future, and the belief that Lucy is innocent could be the other possible conclusion in the future. When evaluating the total evidence, Sam might come to believe that, according to the first-order evidence, Lucy is the thief, but the higher-order evidence indicates that his former evidence does not support that. This is a description of such a mental state in the middle of the coalescence process. The yin side of it is Sam's receptivity to the whole evidence set, and the yang side is the motivation to continue the whole process or even to find more evidence. Now the total evidence includes both his first-order evidence and the higher-order evidence or even more. He needs more time to finish the evaluation of the evidence. In the future, he might reach the final conclusion.

As is shown above, there is an analogy between what happens in the Galileo Moon Case and what happens in the Detective Case. The yin/yang structure of the inference (at least inductive inference) can be extrapolated from the former case to the latter case.

Horowitz raises two questions about the akratic belief. The first one challenges the judgment about the first-order belief. Without the higher-order evidence, Sam believes that Lucy is the thief based on his first-order evidence, and he also believes that his evidence supports that belief properly. But later, with the higher-order evidence, he thinks his evidence does not support the belief. That seems contradictory when Horowitz takes akratic belief as the end result. But it is not. This is because the “evidence to be evaluated” now contains both first-order evidence and higher-order evidence. The target is different. The belief that his evidence does not support the first-order belief implies that the evaluation of the new set of evidence is about to start, rather than the end of the new evaluation.

The second objection raises concerns regarding the assessment of first-order evidence. Horowitz outlines the wrong way to evaluate misleading evidence on the basis of higher-order evidence. “P is true. But all of my evidence relevant to P does not support it. It supports low confidence in a true proposition, P, and therefore high confidence in a false proposition,  $\sim P$ . So, E is misleading.” (Horowitz, 2014, p. 9) She contends that this is not the right way to conclude that the first-order evidence is misleading.

Her aim is to criticize the level-splitting view. According to the level-splitting view, the judgment about misleading evidence is actually about the second-order evidence rather than the first-order evidence. The second-order evidence cannot be a defeater because the rational status of the first-order belief is determined by the first-order evidence, and the second-order evidence cannot change the rational status of the first-order belief. Although I am sympathetic to the level-splitting view on this point, my goal is not to argue for the level-splitting view. The common point of the two views is that they both take the akratic belief to be the end or the conclusion of the entire mental process. Yet unlike the level-splitting view, my account does not regard the akratic belief as the conclusion.

In the sleepy detective case, when Alex tells Sam that his late-night reasoning has been quite sloppy, Sam is just aware of that evidence. He has not had the chance to evaluate it, so he cannot make the judgment about whether the higher-order evidence is misleading or not. Sam might think that “Lucy is guilty based on my previous evidence. What Alex just said makes it seem as if all my evidence now does not support that Lucy is guilty.” According to the yin-yang structure of inference, the natural inclination is to restart the process or to do some further investigation. He might want to find more evidence related to his initial belief. Meanwhile, he might want to know more about the second-order evidence. The critical point to note is that the process, as a whole, takes time.

Another objection is that the akratic belief provides conflicting behavioral dispositions. As in the example of Holmes and Watson, if Watson rationally believes that the butler did it based on his evidence, his belief will motivate him to accept the bet in which he wins \$5 if the butler is guilty and loses \$10 if the butler is innocent. The yang side of a belief is the motivation for accepting the bet. However, suppose that with the second-order evidence, his belief is that “the butler is guilty, but my evidence does not support it.” The additional evidence (or higher-order evidence) affects the stable yin-yang belief state. At the beginning, Watson is receptive to the evidence, and he favors the belief that the butler is guilty, and he is confident about it. The epistemic motivation could be holding this belief constantly or using it in further inferences. If there is such a bet, the belief would generate the potential practical motivation. When Watson’s mental state changes, the yin side changes as he is receptive to new evidence. The initial yang side changes along with it. Being receptive to the higher-order evidence provides a different motivation. The epistemic motivation still exists. The practical motivation changes. At this point, Watson could be motivated to re-investigate the scene, or to ask Holmes why he says so.

The dynamic process of yin-yang concatenation tends to be toward harmony. In the case of belief, when people try to gain knowledge, they need to evaluate the evidence of the belief prudently. When the first-order belief conflicts with the higher-order belief, the belief state becomes unstable.

The process of considering the higher-order evidence and the whole body of evidence might last longer. Sometimes longer than expected, which causes rational delay.

In the previous cases, Holmes's assessment of Watson's inference and Alex's judgment of Sam serves as evidence of their inferential abilities. Broadly speaking, they are the evidence about one's evidence. One accepts the first-order evidence and then evaluates it, which is the yin side. After the evaluation, one decisively forms a belief that is properly supported by the evidence which can provide motivation. The potential motivation is the yang side. One pays attention to the evidence of the first-order process and accepts it because one wants to conceive all the possibilities. Because of the resonance of yin and yang, the previous stable belief is affected. Then one needs to evaluate the whole body of evidence. The process of coalescence of evidence starts again. This is a dynamic process. The judgment of whether the evidence is misleading or not is the end of the process. The akratic belief is only a cross-section of this ongoing process. So, if the akratic belief is taken as the end of the process, it seems to be irrational because it contains conflicts. But akratic belief should not be taken as the end. That is only the middle of the entire rational belief-forming process.

It could be the case where the higher-order evidence is not about inferential capability. Consider the following example. Mary and John got sick. They display the same symptoms. They visit the same doctor and get the same prescription. After taking the medicine, Mary looks better. But that doesn't work for John. After Mary tells John that it works well for her, John might think that the medicine does not work but my evidence does not support it.<sup>14</sup>

In this situation, John's first-order evidence is sufficient because he takes the medicine, but he does not get any better. However, Mary's additional evidence shows that the medicine does work for her. John could believe that the medicine does not work before accepting the new evidence. But now, John accepts the new evidence, so his belief could be "The medicine does not work, but my evidence does not support that." Because he is aware of the new evidence, he tends to re-evaluate the evidence. But he has not started to evaluate the new set of evidence yet. He cannot know whether Mary's evidence is misleading or not. The process of inference is dynamic, so when more yin element comes in, the yang element is increased.

This belief, "The medicine does not work, but my evidence does not support that." also has the yin-yang structure, and it could be hard to judge which evidence is misleading or even whether there is misleading evidence.

One example of crucial evidence could be the evidence about whether the causes of their symptoms are the same. Before John gets more evidence, he cannot continue the evaluation of the evidence, not to mention come to a conclusion. As such, he has to stay in such an unstable state a little longer than expected. That does not mean that this is an irrational mental state. Instead, the belief is a mere part of a still an ongoing process.

## V. Conclusion

In conclusion, the *yin/yang* thoughts provide another perspective on philosophical issues. For example, as Slote points out, the notion of compassion has the *yin-yang* structure. In this paper, I analyze the *yin-yang* structure of belief and inference.

Based on the belief concatenation, we could find that one of the weaknesses of level-splitting views is that they separate the first-order evidence and second-order evidence. Chislenko does not consider the effect of evidence in his argument. Horowitz mistakenly takes akratic belief as a stable conclusive belief state.

In general, yin can be conceived as accepting and evaluating the evidence for the belief that P, which can be taken as a process of coalescence. Believing that P can give a motivation, which is the yang side of the process. If belief can be explained by yin and yang, the first-order process and second-order process will affect each other, and the reliability of one process is not assessed by using the process itself, which avoids the bootstrapping problem mentioned by Horowitz.

The akratic belief describes the unstable, intermediate mental state in the middle of the further evaluation process. If beliefs can be explained by the conception of yin and yang, the akratic beliefs can be taken as the descriptions of a cross-section of the belief concatenation. It does not need to be the end of the entire process. This is because, 1) belief involves affective yin receptivity to the evidence and Yang motivation to use it in inference; 2) that shows that it takes time for an agent to receive and evaluate the higher-order evidence in cases of akratic belief; 3) it can cause rational delay, that is, it takes time for an agent to update her attitude. Hence, akratic belief should be viewed as a middle stage in a dynamic yin/yang process of epistemic discovery. The focus on akrasia ignores this process. So, we should focus on the dynamic side of what is going on when philosophers defend or deny the idea of akratic belief.

*University of Miami, USA*

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For more discussion, see, for example, Levy (2004) and Ribeiro (2011).

<sup>2</sup> See Feldman (2005) and Horowitz (2014).

<sup>3</sup> See Coates (2012), Wedgwood (2012) and Tiozzo (2018).

<sup>4</sup> According to *Zhou Dunyi*, “Non-polar (*wuji*) and yet Supreme Polarity (*taiji*)! The Supreme Polarity in activity generates *yang*; yet at the limit of activity it is still. In stillness it generates *yin*; yet at the limit of stillness it is also active. Activity and stillness alternate; each is the basis of the other. In distinguishing *yin* and *yang*, the Two Modes are thereby established.... The activity within is *yang*, and the stillness is *yin*.” Adler, Joseph A. “Explanation of the Supreme Polarity Diagram” (Taijitu shuo) by Zhou Dunyi Commentary by Zhu Xi (Zhuzi Taijitu shuo jie). (2009, p. 3)

<sup>5</sup> Slote mentions this story to discuss the yin/yang picture of inference in his book “A Larger Yin Yang Philosophy”, he kindly let me borrow this example to discuss belief concatenation.

<sup>6</sup> Moreover, it is “a fact about means-end thinking and action”. If one fully believes something, that belief will provide a motivation. Slote says that, “...belief also involves receptivity, sensitivity, to the world and to one’s sensory data, and that is why analytic philosophers often characterize belief as having a mind-to-world direction of fit. So the belief ‘there is no food in one’s house’ has both a receptive and a directedly purposive or motivated active aspect. It registers what one’s senses tell one about one’s house and particular objects in it (like cupboards or bread boxes), but it also engages with any desire for food one has in a way that leads/motivates one to act in a particular practical direction (to leave the house). This, again, is yin and yang...” (Slote, 2017, pp. 4–5)



As the example shows, the yin side of it is one's receptivity to the sense data about things in the house. The yang side, which is also the epistemic motivation to see the situation from a certain aspect, is one's being certain about the belief that there is no food in the house. Now if one is also receptive to one's feeling of being hungry, and believes that one is hungry, the two beliefs will combine to provide the practical motivation (the yang side) to go out and search for food. So, the concept of belief itself has the yin-yang structure.

- <sup>7</sup> Philosophers like Popper accuse scientists of rushing unreasonably to conclusions, but Slote argues that the decisiveness of someone like Galileo is highly rational, and the rationality can be explained in yin/yang terms.
- <sup>8</sup> Some philosophers claim that the feeling of certainty is a kind of epistemic feeling that bears on beliefs or the validity of inferences. Slote mentions that certitude is a higher-level of epistemic feeling. It is unclear whether epistemic feelings and epistemic emotions are different. Although some philosophers argue that they are different, they are often used interchangeably. See, for example, Meylan (2014).
- <sup>9</sup> Some philosophers argue that epistemic emotions or epistemic feelings are metacognitive in that they can represent the cognitive state of an agent. See, for example, Arango-Muñoz (2014) and Arango-Muñoz and Michaelian (2014). See, for example, Carruthers (2017) for the opposing view.
- <sup>10</sup> Open-mindedness, according to some philosophers, is merely an "auxiliary" ethical virtue. For instance, Sosa claims that the manifestation of intellectual virtues is supposed to both "put you in a position to know" and constitute correct belief which, according to Sosa's definition, counts as knowledge. He makes the distinction between purely epistemic virtue and ethical virtue. Accordingly, open-mindedness is regarded as an ethical virtue. People who are open-minded respect others' views properly because they deserve it. However, it is unclear what count as proper respect on Sosa's view. Stephen L. Darwall defines two kinds of respect (1977).

Recognition respect: There is a kind of respect which can have any of a number of different sorts of things as its object and which consists, most generally, in a disposition to weigh appropriately in one's deliberations some feature of the thing in question and to act accordingly.

Appraisal respect: Its exclusive objects are persons or features which are held to manifest their excellence as persons or as engaged in some specific pursuit. Such respect consists in an attitude of positive appraisal of that person either as a person or as engaged in some particular pursuit. (1977, p. 38)

It is unclear which kind of respect Sosa has in mind, but neither of them meets the requirement for epistemic virtue since both of them can involve value judgment, which cannot help us to avoid negligence.

- <sup>11</sup> Sosa mentions another auxiliary ethical virtue, intellectual courage, for it involves value assessment. He says, "suppose 'intellectual courage' is thought to be a virtue in a certain instance because it helps us properly to assess how much personal risk to take for an answer to a certain question. This would presumably involve estimating the proper value of having that answer and comparing this with the risk to one's personal welfare." (2015, p. 44) The manifestation of intellectual courage occurs during the same process of generating the conclusion. The problem is that it is unclear what count as personal welfare. Suppose that personal welfare means human flourishing in Aristotle's sense. If flourishing is taken as fully realizing human capacities or human nature, it is unclear whether it is the realization of human nature as an individual or as a social animal. So it is unclear whether holding the belief is enough or whether it requires announcing one's belief. If personal welfare is taken as human flourishing in the sense of actualizing human capacities as a rational creature, it is also unclear whether it requires objective rationality or not. Because it is possible that an individual holds a belief that is properly supported by his or her evidence, but he or she has no access to some important information that might affect the belief. However, epistemic decisiveness can avoid the problems of intellectual courage.
- <sup>12</sup> According to evidentialism, the justification of a belief depends on one's evidence. The concept of evidence is related to the concept of reason. For the discussion of evidentialism, see e.g. Conee and Feldman (2004) and Feldman (2012). Another relevant view is dogmatism. For example, Conne (2013) argues that "the event that the person is inclined to regard as a presenting of p's truth, is usually evidence for that truth... even when it is not evidence, the inclination to take a mental occurrence this way usually has a good track record, and cognizance of that association makes for inductive evidence of p."
- <sup>13</sup> I will not assume that belief can be taken as certainty here. Slote points out to me a point Moore missed: when one states p, one represents oneself as knowing that p, not merely believing that p.
- <sup>14</sup> In this case, the second-order evidence is not about one's first-order evidence. I mention this case because it seems to me that second-order evidence should not only include the evidence about one's first-order evidence which might work as defeaters. There could be different kinds of higher-order evidence.

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# The Paradox of Choice in Interactive Fiction: A Critical Analysis of *Bandersnatch*'s 'Choose-Your-Own-Adventure' Structure

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SREYA MUKHERJEE

**Abstract:** This paper explores the emerging field of interactive fiction, with a special focus on the Netflix film *Bandersnatch*, and investigates whether interactive fiction truly empowers its audience to 'choose-their-own-adventure' through the use of free will or if it is simply a pre-scripted illusion. In particular, the paper explores the important role of artificial intelligence (AI) in interactive fiction, and how AI can be used to enhance the audience's experience of narrative agency and choice. The findings suggest that while interactive fiction offers a degree of choice and agency, the options presented to the audience are ultimately predetermined and limit the degree of free will available to the audience. However, the study also highlights the potential for AI to create more complex and dynamic narratives in interactive fiction that offer a greater degree of narrative agency and choice to the audience. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of the nature of narrative agency and the ways in which it is constructed in interactive fiction, as well as highlights the importance of balancing free will and pre-scripted elements in designing engaging and satisfying interactive fiction experiences.

**Keywords:** Interactive fiction, *Bandersnatch*, artificial intelligence, free will, narrative structure

The term Interactive Fiction has gained immense traction in the last couple of decades. From Chaucer to Sherlock Holmes, everything is being cast anew in the mould of Interactive Fiction. It seems that no branch of cultural production remains untouched by the phenomenon of Interactive Fiction. But what exactly is this phenomenon that has captured everyone's attention and got everyone talking?

Interactive Fiction, in its broadest sense, refers to any genre or form of fiction, ranging from epic poetry to narrative-driven video games, that is interactive. Regardless of its medium – whether it's a novel, video game, or cinema – Interactive Fiction is essentially a ludo-narrative. In other words, Interactive Fiction represents an intersection of the narrative conventions such as plot, characters, setting, theme, etc., with the participatory feature that is usually associated with ludic elements (gameplay). Since Interactive Fiction is a kind of ludo-narrative mutant, thus, ludo-narrative dissonance consequently becomes another essential feature of this genre. Ludo-narrative dissonance refers to the tension that is generated when gameplay is represented through narrative conventions, and the narrative is conveyed through ludic elements. Ruth Aylett and Sandy Louchart, eminent minds in the field of virtual reality, rephrase ludo-narrative dissonance as "the interactive paradox" which they describe as, "On one hand the author seeks control over the direction of a narrative in order to give it a satisfactory structure. On the other hand, a participating user demands the autonomy to act and react without explicit authorial constraint" (25).

The ludo-narrative dissonance brings to light the two essential yet contradictory strands of Interactive Fiction, i.e., ludic elements and narrative conventions. These two strands coalesce to give rise

to forms that are peculiar to Interactive Fiction, namely playable stories and narrative games. Playable stories and narrative games, by their very natures, embody the interactive paradox, and in their inherent opposition reflects the distinction formulated by the French sociologist Roger Caillois between two varieties of gameplay, i.e., *paidia* and *ludus*. *Paidia* refers to such games that do not have any defined or pre-determined goals. In other words, such games whose ultimate purpose is neither winning nor losing can be categorized under *paidia*. Hence, *paidia* games are essentially mimetic activities and they are not played for the ultimate reward to be gained by winning but for the sheer pleasure of playing. Indeed, the pleasure experienced by the players of *paidia* games resides in the fact that there are no hard-and-fast rules in such games; the rules if and when they exist, are created spontaneously by the players and can be re-negotiated at any point of the game. For instance, in children's 'make-believe' games the participating children spontaneously decide that a random tree would represent, say, the hut of a witch. Thus, the essential feature of *paidia* is the active engagement of imagination in building fictional worlds, adopting and assimilating foreign entities and establishing social relations. The most suitable examples of *paidia* games are the children's games that involve creating imaginary scenarios and using toys as props for validating their make-believe scenes, such as the popular Indian children's game of arranging weddings of their dolls.

The essence of *paidia* is reflected in the digital genre of playable stories. Like *paidia* games, the playable stories do not lead the user to winning or losing. The ultimate goal of the player is not to beat the game but to observe and participate in the gradual process of story-building. Consequently, the aesthetic pleasure derived from playing playable stories surpasses that of narrative games, which compel the player to focus solely on the ultimate goal of winning. The essence of playable stories does not lie in following a definite set of rules but rather in coaxing a good, enjoyable story out of the system by negotiating rules on the go, in the spirit of *paidia*. For instance, in a playable story like *Virtual Villagers* there cannot be any winner or loser; only participants who will help the distraught villagers survive, and in the process, create their own unique stories. Playable stories encompass simulation games (such as *Virtual Villagers*), role-playing games (like *Diner Dash*), games based on hypertext fiction and interactive drama – games that are played not for the ultimate goal of winning but for the sheer pleasure of it.

*Ludus*, on the other hand, refers to games that are strictly controlled by pre-determined rules, which are accepted by the players as the fundamental game contract, and following these rules results in the clearly defined results of winning or losing. The players of *ludus* games are motivated by their ultimate goal, which is to win the game. In contrast to the *paidia* games, the core essence of *ludus* games lies in the thrill of competition and the satisfaction derived from successfully completing the assigned tasks.

While *paidia* is reflected in playable stories, it can be argued that the spirit of *ludus* inspires narrative games. It is an indisputable fact that video games pre-date digital technology, as we all may be familiar with some of the rudimentary video games such as, *Speed Race* (1974), *Pong* (1972), etc. However, the most significant contribution of digital technology to the field of video games is their 'narrativization.' Narrativization in this context, refers to the transformation undergone by video-games from what used to be abstract playfields, such as two-dimensional football fields or race tracks, into concrete three-dimensional fictional worlds filled with recognizable, life-like objects and individuated characters. The fundamental difference between abstract games, such as chess or soccer, and narrativized games, like *Half-life*, *Resident Evil*, or *Grand Theft Auto* is that in abstract games the thrill is generated and the goals, which imply merely winning the game or scoring the highest points, are made desirable through strict adherence to the rules of the game. Whereas the charm of narrativized games lies in the fact that the players are given the opportunity to pursue goals that resonate with their everyday dreams or suppressed fantasies. The goals of narrative games often involve saving the world from invaders, fighting aliens and zombies, or rescuing the distraught masses from dangers – goals that surely strike a chord in almost every player's heart. Motivated by

such grandiose goals and convincing story-building, the players enter the narrative games with the sole purpose of accomplishing the goals and beating the game, all in the spirit of *ludus*.

In Interactive Fiction, ludic elements and narrative conventions are so inextricably intertwined that it becomes practically impossible to separate one from the other. I would validate my point by quoting the evaluation of the critics of the award-winning video games in the recent years. For instance, The Telegraph described *80 Days*, which was awarded the title of the game of the year 2014 by Time magazine as “Is it a game? Is it a story? Both, really. And a delight.” Similarly, *Device 6* developed by Simogo, which won the Apple Design Award of 2014 was described by New-Gamer-Nation as “You’ll think you’ve accidentally picked up your Kindle device and started a new book.” It can thus be concluded that Interactive Fiction is an inextricable intermingling of ludic elements (gameplay) and narrative conventions.

Nevertheless, both the strands continue to retain their, albeit imperceptible, distinctness which can be discerned through the ‘immersion’ of the reader/player/user in the ludic and narrative elements, respectively. For instance, ludic immersion is the absolute engagement experienced by the user/player while solving a riddle or performing an assigned task. Ludic immersion can be compared to the intense concentration with which a mathematician solves an equation or the intense concentration with which a musician, say, a pianist renders a solo performance. However, this immersive experience is not contingent on the mimetic content of the game. For example, the ludic immersion of the players while playing abstract games, such as chess or soccer is the same as playing *Resident Evil* or *Second Life*, i.e., games with narrative content. In ludic immersion the active physical participation of the player is a prerequisite. Narrative immersion, on the other hand, suggests the mental involvement of the reader’s imagination in constructing and contemplating fictional worlds that rely on the reader’s mental engagement and even emotional involvement, to some extent.

Since interaction and user engagement are essential features of Interactive Fiction, it is natural that language occupies a pre-dominant position within this field. In the words of Nick Montfort, Interactive Fiction is “a program that simulates a world, understands natural language from an interactor, and provides a textual reply based on events in this world” (316). The pioneering incorporation of user’s engagement with the narrative through natural language comprehension is indeed the trailblazing innovation employed by Interactive Fiction, though, unfortunately with limited efficacy. Though interaction through natural language endows the user with a life-like experience of freedom of expression, there is no assurance that the system will comprehend the input and respond in a coherent and logical manner if the user’s utterance does not align with the pre-programmed set of possible utterances. More often than not, Interactive Fiction fails to seamlessly integrate the user responses within the narrative. Despite the promise of Interactive Fiction to grant unprecedented authorial power to the user/player, the narrative, in worst-case scenarios progresses only when the players are divested of their autonomy and are reduced to merely acquiescent objects who are compelled to solve riddles, overcome hurdles and unlock levels in order to complete the course of the game. Such cul-de-sac scenarios are described by the game designer, Chris Crawford as “constipated story.” Similarly, game critic Steven Poole describes the situation in a tongue-in-cheek manner, “It is as if you were reading a novel and being forced by some jocund imp at the end of each chapter to go and win a game of table tennis before being allowed to get back to the story” (109).

Based on the methods of integrating natural language comprehension, Interactive Fiction can be categorised into two branches, namely i) Parser-based interactive fiction; and ii) Choice-based interactive fiction. Parser-based interactive fiction allows users to engage with the narrative by enabling them to type their responses in the designated dialogue box. Unlike choice-based interactive fiction, which compels users to select one item from the pre-determined options, parser-based interactive fiction does not limit the range of user’s responses; they are given the freedom to interact with the narrative in whatever manner they wish. However, the catch in this too-good-to-be-true interactive freedom is that in most instances, the parser will fail to respond logically and adequately.

The parser rejects any input that it fails to process, thereby sacrificing the naturalness of language as well as the player's freedom of expression by severely limiting the player's use of vocabulary and syntax. The parser only accepts inputs that correspond to its pre-programmed list of utterances, which are usually truncated commands like, 'take potion', 'pick up sword', etc.; thereby compelling players to memorize the idiom of the system, almost like learning a second language.

However, the limitations imposed by parser-based interactive fiction on the free flow of natural language pale in comparison to the extreme restrictions in the use of language that occurs in choice-based interactive fiction. The choice-based interactive fiction allows the players to engage with the narrative by picking up an option from the list of canned utterances that appear before the players. Unlike in parser-based interactive fiction, the players are spared from memorising any specialised idiom since the lists of pre-determined choices appear before them. Consequently, in choice-based interactive fiction the system responds coherently and accurately to the player's inputs. However, this efficiency in response is achieved at the expense of the fluidity of narrative, since the narrative time is paused until a choice is made by the player which also affects the players' experience of immersing themselves in the fictional world.

Do You Want to Continue Reading?
1. Yes, of course
2. No
3. Undetermined
4. Do Not Pester Me with Impudent Questions!

Such menu-based or more commonly known, choice-based communication is the most essential and defining characteristic of Interactive Fiction across all media. They ubiquitously occur in every form of Interactive Fiction, whether it be 'Choose-your-own-adventure' novels, video games, or participatory cinemas, and endow the user/player/operator with the power to decide for themselves the course of the events that will take place within the narrative. The narratives of many video games and other forms of interactive fiction, in fact, progress through such interactions between user and characters, where the user selects an item from the given list of canned utterances. This interactivity forms the core essence of interactive fiction as it not only lures the user to participate and engage with the plot but also makes the user's participation indispensable, implying that the absence of the user's participation compels the narrative to terminate. This feature sets the reader/user free from the passivity often associated with conventional/traditional narratives and endows them with authorial freedom and autonomy. By selecting a specific item from the multiple choices available, the user feels responsible for the turn of the events that unfold as the story progresses. The authorial freedom experienced by the user makes them feel that they are not mere passive recipients of the events happening around them, directed by some unseen higher power, as happens in traditional novels or in rudimentary video games like *Super Mario Bros*. Instead, it leads them to believe that they are actually in charge of the events, in fact, they are the ones actively making things happen.

The authorial power endowed to the reader/user by the interactive fiction that has hitherto been denied by traditional narratives is undoubtedly alluring. However, when subjected to intense and close scrutiny the façade of the authorial power crumbles down leaving behind the bare scaffolding. For instance, supposing that this paper is indeed a form of interactive fiction, the multiple-choice-based dialogue previously presented would endow readers with the autonomy to decide how they want to engage with this paper. The power of choosing one option from the four given options will effectuate in readers a feeling of power and autonomy which would be missing if they were reading a traditional paper that does not demand readers' active participation. However, what if the reader



wants to engage with this paper in a manner that is not mentioned in the listed multiple choices available to him/her? At that point the impression of autonomy fades away as one realizes that the reader's choice is limited to the four options, determined by an unseen higher power, and the reader is, in fact, compelled to carry out the dictates of that unseen 'authorial power' by selecting one among the multiple pre-determined choices.

So, does this imply that the free will and authorial power promised by Interactive Fiction to readers are merely an illusion? Can it be concluded that Interactive Fiction is as rigid as the traditional texts, or perhaps worse, for it deceives the readers/users into believing that they have free will while insidiously compelling them to follow the course pre-determined by the higher 'authorial power'? If this is the case then why do people knowingly and willingly fall into the ruse of free will promised by Interactive Fiction? Or does Interactive Fiction genuinely deliver its pioneering promise of endowing the hitherto passive audience with free will and active engagement with the narrative? This paper attempts a philosophical enquiry into the newly emergent yet highly popular field of Interactive Fiction and conducts a narratological analysis of the multiple paradoxes inherent within it with special reference to *Bandersnatch*, and thereby formulates provisional answers to the questions raised above.

However, before delving deeper into the critical enquiry of *Bandersnatch*, it would be expedient to have a closer look at the medium of Interactive Fiction employed by *Bandersnatch*, namely interactive cinema. Up to this point this paper has predominantly focussed on the more common mediums of Interactive Fiction, like video games, choose-your-own-adventure or DIY novels, etc. However, recent years have witnessed the emergence of interactive cinema coinciding with the meteoric development in the field of AI (artificial intelligence). Many film critics have also used the term 'post-cinema' while referring to interactive cinema, though no consensus has yet been reached on the use and definition of the term.

Until the twentieth century the authority to effectuate alteration in films as well as in all other literary/artistic works resided solely with the author (author in this context implies the creator/performer, as the case may be). As we have seen in cases of other forms of Interactive Fiction, the advancement of digital technology endowed the audience of the cinema with the authorial power to modify the work; first by empowering them with the technical ability to alter the audio-visual parameters, such as contrasts, colours, sound/volume, etc.; and gradually by enabling them to modify the course and content of the story. Consequently, viewer's participation becomes the indisputably essential characteristic of interactive cinema, also known as 'post-cinema.'

A perusal of the varied definitions of post-cinema formulated by numerous film critics validates the assertion that interaction is the only unanimously accepted feature of post-cinema, thereby making it in the words of Richard Grusin a "cinema of interactions." According to Grusin, the 'interaction' is defined not only by its relationship,

"With other (primarily) digital media, but also by its aesthetic sense in which we find ourselves faced with a cinema of interactions – the emergence of a visual style and narrative logic that bear relationship to digital media like DVDs and video games rather than to that of photography, drama, or fiction."  
(Grusin 73)

Correspondingly, another French film critic Peter Greenaway, emphasising the quintessence of interactivity defines post-cinema as, "Cinema must now become an interactive multimedia art form [...]. We are forced to confront this new medium that will make *Star Wars* look like a candle-light reading in the sixteenth century" (Greenaway 112).

Apart from the fact that it employs interactive cinema as its medium, what exactly is this esoteric-sounding entity, *Bandersnatch*? As a primary approximation, the following rudimentary definition can be framed, *Bandersnatch* is an interactive audio-visual object, or perhaps a commercial entity that is accessible on the OTT platform, Netflix. A quick and expedient Wikipedia search undertaken in order to supplement the minimal definition of *Bandersnatch* informs that "*Black Mirror*:

*Bandersnatch* is a 2018 interactive film in the science fiction anthology series *Black Mirror*.” The simultaneous presence of ‘film’ and ‘series’ in the above quoted one-line introduction hints at the amorphous nature of *Bandersnatch* which is mysteriously suspended between the two, seemingly irreconcilable universes of television and cinema. *Bandersnatch*'s ambivalent nature is further heightened by its exclusive affiliation to Netflix. As Steven Spielberg's notorious opposition to the presence of Netflix films at the Oscars further testifies to its ambivalent artistic status: “From the moment you commit to televisual format, you make television films.” Similarly, while some critics emphasise *Bandersnatch*'s status as a televised series by linking it to the science fiction anthology series *Black Mirror*, others highlight its cinematic qualities. The confusion among critics regarding the artistic status of *Bandersnatch* is also reflected in the uncertainty of the award-bestowing institutions, since *Bandersnatch* has received awards in both the television and film categories. To the rudimentarily formulated description above, it can now be added that *Bandersnatch* pioneers the evolution of an unprecedented genre in the field of Interactive Fiction that conflates television and cinema and endows the viewers with autonomy to engage, respond and modify the narrative as per their whims, thereby enabling them to assume an authorial role.

The opening scenes of *Bandersnatch* resemble any other regular film: As 9<sup>th</sup> July 1984 dawns, a teenager named Stefan Butler wakes up and gets ready for the ‘mega’ event of his life. He is as irate as any other teenager, suffers from existential angst and debilitating self-doubt, and feels smothered by the overprotectiveness of his father. As it happens, Stefan is about to experience the most important day of his life because he has been given the opportunity to present the proposal of his game project, in the presence of the leading game design expert Colin Ritman, to the biggest player in the field of video games, Tuckersoft Company managed by business tycoon Mohan Thakur. Interestingly, the game project that Stefan is working on, which is tentatively titled “Bandersnatch”, is inspired by a choose-your-own-adventure novel with the same title.

With its deceptively regular plot that strongly resembles coming-of-age movies, *Bandersnatch* catches its viewers off guard when the narrative suddenly pauses and the viewer is compelled to make a decision for Stefan. Initially, the decisions to be made are somewhat mundane or utilitarian, like choosing breakfast for Stefan or deciding the music that he would listen to on his Walkman. However, as the story progresses the decisions to be made assume a darker hue and deeper significance, with the choices increasingly reflecting Stefan's suicidal thoughts and existential angst. The choices to be made by the ‘player-spectator’ throughout the narrative can be categorised into two kinds: i) paradigmatic choices, and ii) syntagmatic choices.

Paradigmatic choices are those that effectuate catalytic changes; in other words, these choices merely serve to embellish the narrative without altering its fundamental trajectory. Under this category falls the decisions mentioned above such as, choosing breakfast and music for Stefan; along with similar decisions to be taken that occur as the story unfolds. For instance, choosing between the options of “scratching ears or biting nails” to express Stefan's anxiety during one of his sessions with his psychologist. Or the more simplistic choices that involve pseudo-options, like the one concerning “More Action? Yes or Fuck Yeah.” It is apparent from the simplistic nature of the choices that they merely result in aesthetic consequences without actually affecting the narrative structure. Regardless of the choice the player-spectator makes in such situations, they do not have any repercussions on the narrative structure pre-determined by the author-programmer. Despite the superficial nature of these choices, it cannot be denied that they induce in the player-spectator a sense of authorial power, autonomy and transitory satisfaction.

In contrast to paradigmatic choices, syntagmatic choices are those that significantly affect the development of the narrative. One of the earliest syntagmatic decisions is faced by the player-spectator during the scene where Stefan presents his game project to Tuckersoft's boss, Mohan Thakur and game developer Colin Ritman. Mohan Thakur accepts Stefan's project and offers him with the choice: either to work independently from home or to develop the project with the aid of

Tuckersoft's employees in the office. At this juncture, the narrative pauses and the player-spectator must make an immediate decision. If the viewer chooses to work in the office, Colin Ritman slips up to Stefan to caution him, "Sorry, man, wrong choice." Hence, the moment from which the choice is made an ominous sense of doom permeates the atmosphere. As had been foreboded by Colin, Stefan feels his creativity throttled while working in team and consequently fails to satisfactorily develop his game project. Thus, the sequence ends with a televised show in which a game critic reiterates the failure of Stefan's project by rating the game zero out of five. However, the narrative does not move forward after the disastrous failure of Stefan's project. Instead, the viewer is compelled to continue the quest of successfully developing Stefan's video game, *Bandersnatch*. Thus, the viewer follows Stefan who undauntedly claims, "I'm trying again," which leads to a rewind of the narrative, and the story restarts right from the opening scene of the buzzing alarm clock until it catches up with the meeting scene at the Tuckersoft office. However, this time the player-spectator doesn't have any choice but to select the offer of working independently from home.

When analysed critically it becomes apparent that the choices offered by Mohan Thakur are in fact no choices at all but rather a ruse. The course of the story had already been determined by the author-programmer and one of the given options doesn't augur well with the pre-determined narrative. Hence, the player-spectator is obligated to begin from scratch and choose the option (implicitly) approved by the author-programmer. Therefore, the freedom and power experienced by the player-spectator in being able to decide the course of Stefan's life is curbed by the arbitrary authority wielded by the author-programmer.

Since the core essence of interactive fiction is user/player's engagement with the narrative, the player-spectator of *Bandersnatch* is endowed with the freedom to decide the course of actions at every crucial point of the narrative. However, to ensure that the narrative follows its pre-determined course despite the freedom of choice granted to the player-spectator, the author-programmer resorts to subtle, implicit interventions such as those demonstrated by the 'nudge' theorists. Through the implicit 'nudges' the author-programmer influences the decisions made by the player-spectator to suit his own purpose, without explicitly ordering or using any other coercive means that would curtail the player's sense of freedom and autonomy. The manipulative means employed by the author-programmer to maintain his/her authorial power is reflected in the working methods of Stefan's psychologist, Dr Haynes.

For instance, after he decides to work on his game project from home, Stefan finds himself increasingly frustrated and distracted because he thinks he is being constantly monitored by his father, with whom he shares a troubled relationship due to an unfortunate event that happened in past. He fixes an appointment with his psychologist Dr Haynes to talk about his worsening anxieties and debilitating mental health. To ease his anxieties Dr Haynes suggests that Stefan should talk about the traumatic event that scarred his childhood. The decision rests with the player-spectator to accept or reject the psychologist's suggestion. If the player rejects her suggestion, she persists: "You could learn things... I ask you again: yes or no?" Here, curiosity acts as the 'nudge' that pushes the player to 'make' Stefan accept the suggestion that he had initially rejected. The player will now be shown a flashback from Stefan's childhood which will help him/her in having a better understanding of Stefan's mental health problems and his troubled relationship with his father. The flashback takes the player-spectator to Stefan's childhood and shows him/her the events leading up to Stefan's mother's accident and how young Stefan held himself and his father responsible for her death, which gradually soured their relationship.

However, if the player persistently rejects Dr Haynes's suggestion to talk about Stefan's traumatic childhood the flashback is skipped and another sequence begins but not before flashing the phrase, "bad choice" on screen, which indicates the author-programmer's opinion about the decision made by the player. The phrase, "bad choice" with its admonishing undertone, also suggests that the player by refusing to talk to Dr Haynes about Stefan's past has, in fact, taken an unnecessary detour.

However, since the circumstances leading up to Stefan's mother's death and its repercussions on the lives of Stefan and his father are crucial to the pre-determined narrative structure, the author-programmer ultimately puts the player in a situation where he/she is left with no choice but to talk about Stefan's past. This episode presents a brilliant demonstration of the author-programmer's manipulative use of the 'nudge' technique through which he/she implicitly coerces the player into choosing the option that had been pre-decided by the author-programmer, while giving the player the impression of employing free will in making decisions.

Throughout the narrative, the player-spectator is constantly reprimanded by the author-programmer, in the form of phrases such as "bad choice" flashing across the screen, or Colin Ritman's forewarning, "Sorry, man, wrong choice," for choosing an option that was not meant to be chosen. Whenever an option is chosen that goes against the pre-scripted narrative structure, the player reaches a dead end, losing even the illusory authorial power endowed to him/her. In such cul-de-sac situations, the author-programmer, without letting the player discern his presence, exercises his imperceptible yet absolute authority by forcing the player to go back, to "try again" but presenting only such options that have been pre-approved by the author-programmer. However, it must also be noted that the player-spectator can go back and begin things from scratch only if it is approved by the author-programmer. For instance, the player-spectator is not allowed to go back to Stefan's childhood and make him do things differently that would forestall the impending death of his mother, in order to maintain the cardinal structure of the narrative.

The blatant curtailing of the player's autonomy by the arbitrary authority wielded by the author-programmer can also be illustrated through the following episode: In one of his worst moments of mental agony, the player has to decide for Stefan how he should be expressing his anguish. The choices available to the player are "spilling tea on the computer" and "answer Dad with a scream." However, "spilling tea on the computer" is a pseudo-choice and the narrative can progress only if "answer Dad with a scream" is chosen. If the player selects "spilling tea on the computer," which is a 'bad choice' that will inevitably lead to a dead end, the author-programmer would promptly rectify it by sending the player back on track and nudging him/her to choose the 'approved' option. However, the ultimate constraint of the player's autonomy in *Bandersnatch* occurs if the player, despite being rectified by the author-programmer, persists in choosing the 'bad choice,' i.e., "spilling tea on the computer." Unlike other instances in which a persistent choosing of the 'bad choice' by the player will lead to an omission of the entire sequence only to be repeated later with the 'bad choice' being eliminated; in this case choosing "spilling tea on the computer" repeatedly will result in an explicit refusal by Stefan to do so. He will instead choose the alternate 'pre-approved' option of his own accord in an utter disregard of the player's autonomy.

Though *Bandersnatch* endows the player-spectator with the freedom to make decisions that would affect the course of the protagonist's life, it succeeds in retaining the cardinal structure of its pre-determined narrative. The choices made by the player-spectator, except for resulting in a few minor variations, do not actually disrupt the narrative structure put in place by the author-programmer. *Bandersnatch* creates a new space for its player-spectator by placing him/her midway between the two extremes of the spectrum represented by the passivity of the traditional movie viewer and the active involvement of the video game player. As the plot progresses, the player-spectator feels increasingly baffled at the gradual erosion of his/her autonomy; a bleak experience which can be succinctly summarized in the words of André Gaudreault and Philippe Marion, "The dictatorship of the work imposes itself on me, at the discretion of the television channel programmers" (192). Stefan's paranoia, as he expresses in one of his therapy sessions with Dr. Haynes, "I lose control over myself, it is as if someone else were making my choices, like choosing my cereal, yelling at Dad, listening to the music...." is gradually reflected in the condition of the player-spectator whose autonomy erodes as the narrative progresses and who is ultimately controlled by the author-programmer. One cannot help but acknowledge the eerie resemblance of the strangeness of the whole situation

that occurs in *Bandersnatch* with a fictitious scene conjured by Jorge Luis Borges: “Chess pieces that are unaware of being guided by a player, who does not know that he is guided by a god, a god who does not know that he is guided by another god” (193).

It is indeed baffling that though *Bandersnatch* undoubtedly belongs to the realm of Interactive Fiction – a field which promises unprecedented freedom and authorial power to the player/user/reader; it ironically emphasises more on curtailing the freedom of the player-spectator rather than enhancing it. In *Bandersnatch*, there are numerous instances of curtailment of the player’s freedom as demonstrated throughout this paper and the restrictions imposed by the author-programmer on the choices made by the players in order to maintain the narrative structure. Such constraints relegate the player to a periphery position like that of Stefan, as both Stefan and the player are unsuspecting actors who are being controlled by a higher unseen power, i.e., the author-programmer. The basic tenets of *Bandersnatch* such as, its obstinate retention of the pre-determined narrative structure, implicitly coercing the player-spectator to choose the pre-approved options, the impossibility of going back and changing the choices made except when explicitly approved by the author-programmer, etc. substantiate the conclusion that Interactive Fiction like most other artistic/literary works follows a definite, pre-determined structure. Interactive Fiction’s failure to deliver its promise of endowing the player/user/reader with authorial power and freedom to choose is due to the fact that AI and digital technology haven’t yet evolved to the extent to enable the works of Interactive Fiction to include the infinite possible endings that each of the options, if developed properly, has the potential to lead to.

Other than the technological limitations, there are certain philosophical and scientific conundrums as well that obstruct the fulfilment of promises made by Interactive Fiction. Though Interactive Fiction builds upon the postmodern theory of the simultaneous existence of multiple realities, but due to temporal and spatial constraints it restricts its audience to experience only one reality at any particular point in time. Since it is practically impossible to assimilate the infinite realities, all works of Interactive Fiction including *Bandersnatch* emphasise the constraint rather than the freedom of player/user/reader. The impossibility of existing in multiple dimensions or experiencing multiple realities at one particular point in time is wonderfully captured by Robert Frost in his famous poem, *The Road Not Taken*:

“Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveller, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;” (Frost: lines 1–5)

Hence it becomes clear that Interactive Fiction rather than emphasising the player’s free will places more focus on the constraints and restrictions for maintaining its pre-determined narrative structure. However, the question then arises: Why do the audience of Interactive Fiction willingly allow themselves to be lured by such works that gradually erode their autonomy and inevitably end up controlling them? The answer perhaps lies in the immersive power of Interactive Fiction.

Narrative immersion, which implies the active engagement of the mental faculties of the user/player for constructing a story world as well as filling in the narrative blanks, is an essential feature of Interactive Fiction. The quintessential manifestation of the immersive power of Interactive Fiction occurs in the form of ‘epistemic’ immersion. Epistemic immersion entails the mental involvement of the user/player in the fate of the character controlled by him/her, the overwhelming desire to know what ultimately becomes of that character, and how the choices made by the user/player affect the turn of events in the narrative. Epistemic immersion is easier to evoke in the user/player in an interactive environment, rather than in the rigid narrative structure of the traditional literary/artistic works. Interactive Fiction, by piquing the curiosity of the player assigns him/her the role of an investigator to make sense of the fictional world as well as the destiny of the controlled character.



The player is thus empowered to navigate through the past, present and future phases of the controlled character's life, unravel the secrets of the character's past as well as experience vicariously the complexities of his/her life. The narratives of Interactive Fiction also include fixed and, consequently non-interactive sequences, such as the flashback sequence in *Bandersnatch*. Nevertheless, the non-interactive sequences are so seamlessly embedded into the interactive ambience of the narrative that the players continue to enact their assigned role of the investigator, picking up clues and attempting to comprehend the intricacies of the fictional world and the ultimate fate of the controlled character.

Besides epistemic immersion, Interactive Fiction also engages its audience by inducing in them an emotional immersion. As mentioned before, narrative interest views the fictional characters as individuated people with a life and purpose of their own; whereas ludic interest, on the other hand, views the characters as mere means to achieve an end. Hence, in traditional video games like *Super Mario*, the player will help the controlled character (Mario) to fight villains and overcome hurdles in order to rescue the princess, but the player is not motivated by any romantic interest in the princess to act so. Rather, he/she assists Mario to rescue the princess in order to beat the game, which is the player's ultimate goal. However, in works of Interactive Fiction, like *Bandersnatch*, the controlled character (Stefan) not only serves as a functional character to help or hamper the player's pursuit of his/her goal but also induces interest and emotional involvement in the player through his own individuated personality. Since the player controls Stefan's life by influencing the decisions he takes, the player begins to feel personally responsible for what will eventually become of him. Hence, the player develops an empathetic connection with Stefan and becomes emotionally invested in his life, which the player believes is controlled by him/her. Thus, Interactive Fiction without actually allowing the player to control the narrative keeps him/her thoroughly involved by employing the techniques of immersion and creating the illusion of free will and authorial power.

Interactive Fiction, through its controlled characters, exemplifies the struggles of life against a hostile or perhaps indifferent world that continues to follow its own course like the fixed narrative structure of *Bandersnatch*, unmindful of the choices made by humans. The core features of Interactive Fiction such as, the matrix of hyper-textuality embedded into its narrative structure; the frequent branching of the narrative into recombinant units; interactivity; acknowledging the existences of multiple realities; and the rejection of linearity, chronology and causality through its fragmented, non-linear narrative; have contributed significantly to the postmodern incredulity and consequent deconstruction of the metanarrative. However, despite its enormous potential, Interactive Fiction has its own share of drawbacks that obstruct the fulfilment of its potential. The most detrimental drawback, as mentioned before, is its inability to accommodate the infinite possibilities and multiple realities within its narrative structure. The inability to assimilate multiple realities results in the adoption of a fixed narrative by the works of Interactive Fiction, which gradually obliterates the freedom of the player/user and becomes the instrumental reason behind the failure of Interactive Fiction to endow its users with real authorial power and autonomy.

Nevertheless, it must not be forgotten that Interactive Fiction is still at a nascent stage of its evolution, and has immense potential to usher in an unprecedented transformation in the way we interact with literary and other artistic works. Hence, it would be grossly unfair to dismiss Interactive Fiction at this early stage for its apparent flaws and inability to deliver on its promises. Rejecting Interactive Fiction at its nascent stage entails missing out on the exciting future possibilities that it holds the potential to develop. As Chris Crawford states, "To dismiss interactive storytelling on the grounds that it hasn't been done before is to reject the entire basis of the human intellectual adventure" (Crawford 50).



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# Vedute of Venice: The Eighteenth-Century Venetian View as Picturesque Locus of Transformation

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REBECCA J. SQUIRES

**Abstract:** In the long eighteenth century, Venice was memorialized in painted *vedute*, or view-paintings, which became both a style and a subject matter, buoyed by the popularity of the tableaux as souvenirs for Grand Tour travellers. The *veduta*, along with its fantasy counterpart, the *capriccio*, re-created the view as well as the perceptual experience of the spectator, engaging the processes of visual apprehension involved in the incision of the image onto the retina. *Vedutisti*, or view-painters, would use the camera obscura to achieve verisimilitude in a painting, while enlarging known monuments so as to activate the sense memory of the viewer. The Venetian *veduta*, in cross-pollination with picturesque landscape painting, facilitated the transformation from nature to art within the eye, projecting the perspectivized two-dimensional visual field onto the three-dimensional visual world, making pictures of the world around us, transforming the way we view the landscape today.

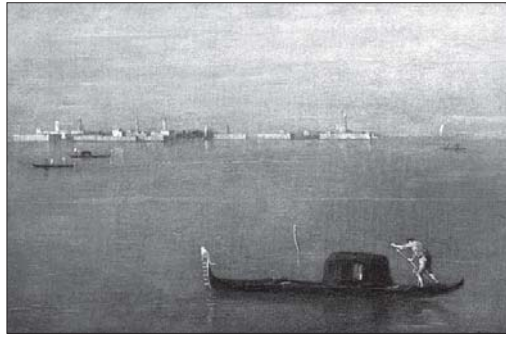
**Keywords:** Venetian *veduta*, view-painting, *vedutismo*, *capriccio*, eighteenth century, picturesque aesthetics, landscape painting, Canaletto, J.M.W. Turner

The Serenissima Repubblica di Venezia, The Most Serene Republic of Venice, was both a symbol and locus of eighteenth-century picturesque transformation.<sup>1</sup> As a city fashioned by nature and human engineering, transformation characterized Venice's rise from torpid lagoon to maritime republic to its eighteenth-century incarnation as artistic subject and Grand Tour destination. Venice, as interstice between land and water, splendor and stagnation, and topography and imaginary, was a site of catalysis.

The otherworldly quality of the floating city facilitated the flux between the observed and the imagined, enchanting Grand Tour travellers and artists alike. This intersection gave rise to a new kind of topographical, yet evocative way of envisioning Venice, manifested in the *veduta*, or view-painting.<sup>2</sup> The Venetian *veduta* lay at the threshold between the physical landscape and human perception, demonstrating the transformation from nature to art within the eye. In Francesco Guardi's *veduta ideata* or idealized view-painting, *Gondole sulla laguna* (1761-1770), Venice's topography floats upon atmospheric waters conjured by the artist (fig. 1).

The Venetian *veduta* drew upon Venice's rich painting tradition, with fifteenth- and sixteenth-century painters such as Bellini, Carpaccio, and Giorgione including topographically representative Venetian backdrops in their narrative and figurative works.<sup>3</sup> In the seventeenth century, painters like Gerard ter Borch and Willem van Nieulandt II brought the Flemish panoramic view of a century earlier to the Roman *veduta*, conceiving both realistic and idealized representations of Rome's landscapes and cityscapes.<sup>4</sup> Grand Tour travellers also had an impact on the *veduta*, preferring recognizable views that evoked the sights and sensations of Venice. Filippo Pedrocchi links the evolution of Canaletto's style to the taste of British buyers in his move toward a luminous, topo-

graphically precise tableau.<sup>5</sup> Seventeenth-century landscape artists Salvator Rosa and Claude Lorrain also contributed to the development of the idealized Italian tableau, anticipating the picturesque aesthetic that would arise a century later. As the *veduta* rose in standing and popularity as a painting genre and Grand Tour souvenir, Venice's imaginary proliferated Europe, attaining near-mythical status.



**Fig. 1.** Francesco Guardi, *Gondole sulla laguna (Laguna grigia)*, 1761–1770, oil on canvas, Milan, Museo Poldi Pezzoli. *Vedute ideate*, or idealized view-paintings, blurred the lines between Venice's topography and its imaginary.

While the *veduta* was meant to reproduce the natural and architectural contours of Venice, *capricci*, on the other hand, evoked Venice's imaginary. At the confluence of topography and invention, the *capriccio* deployed known monuments or contrived new ones, discarding inconvenient scenery at will. In Canaletto's *A Capriccio View with a Pointed Arch* (1744), a crumbling Venetian arch frames a domed church in the distance, while the scene opens out onto an assortment of architectural ruins, with peasants inhabiting a world both cataclysmic and picturesque (fig. 2).



**Fig. 2.** Giovanni Antonio Canal called Canaletto, *A Capriccio View with a Pointed Arch*, 1742–1744, oil on canvas, Royal Collection Trust. Crumbling ruins, exotic monuments, and architectural inventions were motifs in the Italian *capriccio*.

The subordination of the Venetian scene according to the will, or “caprice” of the painter underscored the role of the artist as conduit of natural and even supernatural phenomena, exalting the sensing human as empirical oculus.<sup>6</sup> The subjectification of nature went hand in hand with the elevation of the human as conduit of knowledge according to John Locke's empiricism (1689), which stated that knowledge was created through experience, evidenced through sensory perception and reflection.<sup>7</sup> Étienne Bonnot de Condillac even more radically excluded reflection in his

empirical sensationism (1746), asserting that knowledge is composed purely of transformed sensation.<sup>8</sup> The conversion from visual sensation to knowledge was performed within the eye of the spectator, reflected in the transposition from land to landscape, and re-created in the *veduta*. Contemporary scholar Alain Roger describes this transformation as *artialisation in visu*, wherein land is visually transposed into landscape according to the aesthetic conventions of a given time period.<sup>9</sup>

The eighteenth-century shift toward empiricism was echoed in the progression from the topographically imitative *veduta esatta* to the *veduta ideata*, as landscape perfected by the human. The *capriccio*, diverging from all that was natural or existent, showed the mastery of the artist over the natural and built environment, however, the categorical distinctions between *vedute* started to blur where topographical accuracy and the appearance of naturalness diverged. In fact, the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century *veduta* had already been corrected, enhanced, and reconstructed for the eye's delectation, deviating from the projection of the camera obscura.<sup>10</sup> In Canaletto's *veduta esatta*, *The Grand Canal with Santa Maria della Salute Looking East Toward the Bacino* (1744), an "exact view" of Venice was generated from the camera obscura's wide-angle perspective of the imposing church, contraposed by a line of diminishing *palazzi* leading toward the painting's vanishing point (fig. 3). The church's dome would have been corrected by the artist along with the curved or distorted forms that appear on the periphery of the projection's vanishing point. Whether or not the camera obscura was consulted in the painting of a particular *veduta*, known monuments were enlarged by *vedutisti* to capture the eye, just as the gaze might linger over such sights in the three-dimensional visual world.



**Fig. 3.** Giovanni Antonio Canal called Canaletto, *The Grand Canal with Santa Maria della Salute Looking East Toward the Bacino*, 1744, oil on canvas, Royal Collection Trust. This view appears modern due to the camera obscura's wide-angle projection of the scene, the contrast between the size of the church in the foreground and the buildings lining the canal, along with the cropping of the tableau.

The exclusion of the church's finial and miniature dome atop the church's domed roof was likely due to the framing imposed by the camera obscura.

As with the two-dimensional projection of the view onto the retina, the Venetian *veduta* constructed a two-dimensional impression that was anything but objective. The act of visual perception is laden not only with subjectivity, but imbued with emotion, each image evoking a particular perspective, light, hue, character, and mood of Venice. John Macarthur describes this subjectivity through early nineteenth-century empathy theory as "subject-objectification", defined as the "projection of subjectivity onto the object", which in this case is the Venetian landscape, subjectified through the human gaze.<sup>11</sup>

In Luca Carlevarijs's *The Bridge for the Feast of the Madonna della Salute* (1720), Venice's topography is transformed into what appears to be a stage set, illustrating Macarthur's subject-objectification as spectators gaze out upon the panorama from a bridge that doubles as a mezzanine, while

onlookers peer out from balconies above (fig. 4). A plume-like cloud further encloses the scene, conveying the gaze toward the focal point. The bridge removes the subjects from the prospect, while the spectator becomes a party to this displacement. An almost voyeuristic awareness is educed in the picture-viewer, who, as an entity outside of the painting, projects subjectivity onto this picture within a picture.



**Fig. 4.** Luca Carlevarijs, *The Bridge for the Feast of the Madonna della Salute*, 1720, oil on canvas, Hartford, USA, Wadsworth Atheneum. Luca Carlevarijs, along with his teacher, Gaspar Van Wittel, pioneered the sweeping views that would come to characterize the eighteenth-century Venetian *veduta*.

The extraction of the two-dimensional tableau from the three-dimensional landscape, exemplified in the *veduta*, lends insight into the eighteenth-century picturesque aesthetic that made pictures of the world around us.<sup>12</sup> However, this aesthetic category was so ambiguous that eighteenth-century picturesque theorist Uvedale Price complained that the picturesque was “applied to every object, and every kind of scenery which has been, or might be represented with good effect in painting.”<sup>13</sup> What the picturesque aesthetic lacked in concreteness, was made up for in the *veduta*, which could be considered the ideal testing ground for picturesque precepts due to its narrower scope and subject matter, defined approaches, and dual focus on representation of the landscape and the elicitation of its experience. It can be argued that eighteenth-century *vedutismo* and picturesque landscape painting cross-pollinated, attaining fruition together. The *veduta* was perfected through advances in technique and execution driven by the expertise of the *vedutisti*, bolstered by commercial demand for painted Venetian views, while the picturesque accompanied the rise of European Enlightenment, underscoring humanity’s relationship with nature, while signalling its domination, in the ultimate testament to human ingenuity, progress, and sovereignty.

The operation of contraries in both *vedutismo* and picturesque painting seems best described by Hegel’s dialectical method outlined in his 1807 *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*. These dualities include the flux between the observed and the imagined in the Venetian view, the eye’s darting between contrasting points of view in *papillotage* (see Vernet’s *Italian landscape* in fig. 5), the conversion from the third to the second dimension in the retina, and the transformation from landscape to picture.<sup>14</sup> Hegel’s dialectics brought together opposing ideas, forging a new, more resilient concept in a “unity of distinctions.”<sup>15</sup> The result of this dialectical process, according to Hegel, was “a new concept but one higher and richer than the preceding—richer because it negates or opposes the preceding and therefore contains it, and it contains even more than that, for it is the unity of itself and its opposite.”<sup>16</sup>

Hovering between the dialectics of being and non-being, the fixed and the fleeting, the observed and the imagined, Venice itself had become a *capriccio*, its contours traced by humans, its tides determined by nature, its imaginary exalted to mythical status. Venice, whether brought back as a sense memory from the Grand Tour, or evoked through a painted souvenir, demonstrated the *veduta* as both stimulus and vestige of sensory experience, the ultimate conveyance of empirical knowledge.





**Fig. 5.** Claude Joseph Vernet, *Italian Landscape*, 1738, oil on canvas, London, Dulwich Picture Gallery. The mode of visual apprehension known as *papillotage*, or fluttering, was re-created in eighteenth-century painting so as to innervate the senses and re-create the perceptual experience of vision and the view. *Papillotage* relied on visual contradiction, achieved through contrasting patches of color, light, or pattern, along with the addition of multiple prospects, fragmented outlooks, or superimposed points of view. Vernet makes use of *papillotage* in this *Italian Landscape*, which dazzles with a multiplicity of prospects seen through the viewpoints of the various subjects depicted, including that of a shepherd, lolling lovers, and precariously poised wanderers, while the gaze flits between contradistinct planes in the rock strata, which seem to re-position themselves according to the oscillating focus of the viewer. The objective of Vernet and other eighteenth-century artists was to replicate the movement of the eye when apprehending a landscape by postponing the eye's arrival at the focal point of the painting, just as the gaze continually shifts when viewing a landscape.



**Fig. 6.** Thomas Gainsborough, sketch of an artist using a Claude glass, c. 1750, graphite on paper, London, The British Museum.

While the picturesque transformation from landscape to image may seem unremarkable according to the almost automatic mental picture-making processes of today, the picturesque view, for the first time in history, stimulated, and even required the conversion from landscape to image, thus foreseeing the still and moving image. In a sketch by Thomas Gainsborough (c.1750), an artist gazes into a device called the Claude glass, which converts the three-dimensional visual world into the perspectivized two-dimensional visual field (fig. 6).<sup>17</sup> This dark, convex mirror framed and coerced the landscape into a circumscribed, two-dimensional tableau while reducing its tonal range, making it appear more like a picture, or picturesque.<sup>18</sup> The Claude glass was employed not only by artists, but by tourists, and Grand Tour travellers. In using the glass, the observer would turn their back on the landscape, effectively detaching themselves from it, excising the two-dimensional image from the three-dimensional landscape. Both the Claude glass and the camera obscura can be considered precursors to the photographic camera in their use of glass or lenses to frame, convert, perspectivize, and capture the image.

Challenging the dialectics of the picturesque was Joseph Mallord William Turner, who ushered picturesque aesthetics into the nineteenth century, transfiguring them in the process. While not strictly a picturesque artist, nor a true *vedutista*, Turner engaged with both picturesque and view-painting precepts, confronting their problematics. Turner responded to picturesque contraries with innovation, effacing the boundaries between worlds, transcending the dichotomic notions of the picturesque. Turner's *Storm at the Mouth of the Grand Canal, Venice* (1840) exemplifies the picturesque view as an interstitial space between materiality and immateriality, exposing Venice's architectural underpinnings while invoking its fugitive essence (fig. 7). Turner lays bare both inner and outer worlds, evaporating the landscape while preserving its dualities, demonstrating the Venetian *veduta* as combining not only multiple prospects, but myriad planes of existence, shimmering side by side in Hegel's "unity of distinctions".



Fig. 7. Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Storm at the Mouth of the Grand Canal, Venice*, ca. 1840, watercolor on paper, National Gallery of Ireland.



Fig. 8. Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Venice - Sunset, a Fisher*, 1845, oil on canvas, London, Tate Gallery.

In Turner's *Venice - Sunset, a Fisher* (1845), a dark swath of clouds bisects the tableau, inverting the balance of the painting, as if auguring a collapse of negative forms in space-time (fig. 8). These volatile forms destabilize the seascape in a simultaneous movement of expansion and collapse. The delineation and dissolution of the natural and architectural contours of Venice show the superimposition of perspective onto the three-dimensional landscape as altering its physical disposition. Thus, the projection of the two-dimensional visual field onto the three-dimensional visual world ultimately brings about its destruction. This process of disintegration and re-coalescence of the tableau is continual, as the eye splinters and agglomerates a multiplicity of prospects, like a film, composed of individual frames, becomes a personalized visual narrative. This picture-making process both privatizes and subjectifies the image, making the two-dimensional projection of the image onto the retina closer to a vision, dream, or imagining.

Turner's reconciliation of the visual world with the visual field, along with the unification of Venice's seascape with its imaginary, are a visualization of Hegel's dialectical method in which being, as a stable moment, passes to its opposite, nothing, and is destabilized and conjoined to its contrary. Hegel's *Aufheben*, or sublation, not only to cancels, but uplifts and preserves, forming a new, even more essential or resilient concept which evolves over time.<sup>19</sup> According to Hegel, history proceeds not through the discarding of contradictory notions, but through the process of becoming, or sublation.<sup>20</sup> Turner's resolution of picturesque dialectics marks the turning point from the early modern to the modern in art, illuminated through the transcendence, pluralism, and durability of his future vision.

LUCA School of Arts, KU Leuven, Brussels, Belgium

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Venice, known as *La Serenissima*, The Most Serene, was officially called *La Serenissima Repubblica di Venezia*, or The Most Serene Republic of Venice. The Venetian Republic existed until the very end of the eighteenth century, spanning an 1100-year rule from 697 CE to 1797 CE, becoming a part of unified Italy in 1866.

<sup>2</sup> A *veduta* (pl. *vedute*) is a painted view or panorama of a landscape, waterscape, or cityscape, known as a view-painting in English. A *vedutista* (pl. *vedutisti*) is a view-painter. *Vedutismo* signifies the movement or style of view-painting in Italy, especially in Venice or Rome, with its apogee in the eighteenth century.

<sup>3</sup> Filippo Pedrocchi, *Canaletto and the Venetian Vedutisti* (New York: Scala/Riverside, 1995), 3–5.

<sup>4</sup> Giuliano Briganti, *Gaspar van Wittel e l'origine della veduta settecentesca* (Rome: Ugo Bozzi, 1966).

<sup>5</sup> According to Pedrocchi, Canaletto's style had been influenced by his association with Owen McSwiney, who, in 1727, began commissioning Canaletto's work on behalf of English collectors. Pedrocchi, *Canaletto*, 30.

<sup>6</sup> The *capriccio*, or caprice, was a fantasy view which freed the artist from the constraints of mimesis, or the imitation of nature in art, which, according to classical Greek thought, enabled art to attain beauty and truth, with nature serving as a model. Still very much a relevant precept in the long eighteenth century, poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge expounds upon the role of mimesis in poetry; Coleridge opposes what he sees as Wordsworth's mere mimicry of nature in his poetry, instead relying on a participatory relationship with nature issuing from a liberal interpretation of mimesis wherein the "spiritual instinct of the human being" impels one toward a whole that is "assimilated to the more important and essential parts [through] interfusion". Coleridge states that "the composition of a poem [...] consists either in the interfusion of the SAME throughout the radically DIFFERENT, or of the different throughout a base radically the same", evidencing the dialectics that had emerged from the eighteenth-century understanding of human perception and its implication in the arts. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, ed. Adam Roberts (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, [1817] 2014), 259; emphasis in original.



- <sup>7</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (London: Thomas Basset, 1689). In Locke's *Essay* he explores the origins of ideas, displacing divine or innate ideas from the center of knowledge creation, describing the mind as a blank slate at birth. According to Locke, knowledge is acquired through sensory experience followed by reflection on that experience.
- <sup>8</sup> According to Condillac, all knowledge is transformed sensation. Condillac writes that "the perception or the impression occasioned in the mind by the action of the senses is the first operation of the understanding." Just as Condillac excludes reflection in his sensationist epistemology, Hegel discounts the efficacy of reflective cognition, demonstrating the potential of speculative cognition in the advancement of knowledge through his dialectical method. This rejection of reflective thinking points toward the need for further study on whether or how reflection might interact with sensory experience. Étienne Bonnot de Condillac, *Essay on the Origin of Human Knowledge*, trans. and ed. by Hans Aarsleff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1746] 2001), 19.
- <sup>9</sup> Alain Roger, *Court traité du paysage* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997). Alain Roger resurrects Renaissance philosopher Michel de Montaigne's term *artificialisation* to depict the visual transformation of land into landscape according to aesthetic convention, which Roger calls *artificialisation in visu*.
- <sup>10</sup> Christoph Lüthy, "Hockney's Secret Knowledge, Vanvitelli's Camera Obscura", *Early Science and Medicine* 10, no. 2 (2005): 338.
- <sup>11</sup> John Macarthur, "The Picturesque Movement-Effect: Motion and Architectural Affects in Wölfflin and Benjamin", *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Art* 3, no. 1 (2002): 136-157.
- <sup>12</sup> Rebecca J. Squires, "The Radical Traverse of Space-Time in the Eighteenth-Century Picturesque Garden", *Arquitectura y Paisaje: Transferencias Históricas, Retos Contemporáneos*, vol. 2 (Madrid: Abada Editores, 2022), 1697-1708. The author writes:  
The term "picturesque" finds its origins in the Italian "pittresco", which comprises two distinct meanings: a landscape resembling a painting, or a painterly quality or style. The painting, as three-dimensional object and two-dimensional image, exemplifies this fluctuation between dualities. The picturesque shift between landscape and art was noted by Alexander Pope in 1734 when he said "all gardening is landscape-painting, just like a landscape hung up". Thus the picturesque landscape flickered between nature and art, and the third and second dimension, while its image was fragmented, displaced, and re-assembled in the mind of the spectator.
- Joseph Spence quotes Alexander Pope in *Anecdotes, Observations, and Characters, of Books and Men. Collected from the Conversations of Mr. Pope and other Eminent Persons of His Time* (London: W.H. Carpenter, 1820).
- <sup>13</sup> Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful; and, on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape* (London: J. Robson, 1796), 46.
- <sup>14</sup> *Papillotage* gathers multiple points of view, interrupting the cohesion of the gaze, splintering visual impressions within the unconscious, creating a discourse between object and self. Marian Hobson writes that *papillotage* "expresses both the gaze, the acceptance of the object seen, and the blink which cuts the eye from contact with the world and, in so doing, brings the self back to self." Marian Hobson, *The Object of Art: The Theory of Illusion in Eighteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 52.
- <sup>15</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. Terry Pinkard (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, [1807] 2019).
- <sup>16</sup> Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. George di Giovanni (New York: Cambridge University Press, [1812-1816] 2010), 54.
- <sup>17</sup> James J. Gibson distinguishes between the three-dimensional visual world and the two-dimensional visual field in *The Perception of the Visual World* (Cambridge, MA: The Riverside Press, 1950). According to Gibson, the three-dimension visual world is the "familiar, ordinary scene of daily life in which [...] square objects look square," horizontal surfaces never meet, and "the book across the room looks as big as the book lying in front of you", while the visual field requires "the attitude [...] of the perspective draftsman". Gibson, *The Perception of the Visual World*, 26-27. Katherine Myers refers to the operation of Gibson's visual world and visual field in the picturesque, stating that the picturesque "must pre-suppose a theory of vision that allows for the ability to see the world as if projected on a flat canvas." Katherine Myers, "Visual Fields: Theories of Perception and the Landscape Garden", *Experiencing the Garden in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Martin Calder (Bern: Peter Lang, 2006), 13-14.
- <sup>18</sup> The Claude glass was named after seventeenth-century painter Claude Lorrain due to its purported ability to effect a Claude-like transformation of the landscape in the glass. Claude Lorrain (1600-1682), also known

as Claude Gellée, or simply Claude, was a seventeenth-century picturesque forerunner who created landscapes and seascapes that would epitomize the picturesque ideal a century later. The Claude glass was probably never used by Claude, as it came into popular use in the eighteenth century.

<sup>19</sup> For more information on the application of phenomenological concepts, see: Brian E. Neubauer, Catherine T. Witkop, and Laura Varpio, “How Phenomenology Can Help Us Learn from the Experiences of Others”, *Perspectives on Medical Education* 8 (2019): 90–97.

<sup>20</sup> Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*.

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# “Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet”: A Study of Cultural Dissension in Pankaj Mishra’s *The Romantics*

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MADHURIMA NAYAK

**Abstract:** My paper will attempt to explore the negation of any possibility of East-West confluence in Pankaj Mishra’s *The Romantics*, its theme being in continuity with E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*. While Forster underscored the fundamental failure of connection at the core of East-West relationships, Mishra’s *The Romantics* provides poignant insights into the dissonance in value systems between the East and the West, highlighting the persistent cultural discord despite the professed cosmopolitanism of the contemporary era. Despite the acclaim surrounding Homi Bhabha’s concept of “hybridity” and Mary Louise Pratt’s idea of the “contact zone”, even after the passage of seventy-five years since Forster’s seminal work, Mishra’s *The Romantics* reaffirms the enduring relevance of the “hundred voices” in Forster’s narrative, echoing the resounding chorus of “No, not yet.” It resounds with the echoes of the sky proclaiming, “No, not there” (Forster 1924). Mishra’s novel reveals in a poignant way the continuing chasm between the East and the West even after the end of colonialism.

**Keywords:** Cosmopolitanism, East-West, confluence, culture, contact zone, hybridity

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,  
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God’s great Judgement Seat;

–Kipling, “The Ballad of East and West”

Kipling’s words may appear anomalous within the contemporary context of cosmopolitanism and globalism, where the delineations of national culture and psyche are gradually diminishing. Nonetheless, the enigma of interpersonal communion, or rather the persistent challenges in achieving effective communication, remains salient even in our current epoch, characterized by the concept of a “global village.” The fluid exchange of commodities, technologies, and human mobility across international borders obscures the enduring disparities in values and mental frameworks between the Eastern and Western hemispheres of our planet. The Western world, often characterized as “materialist,” has harbored an enduring fascination, since the days of colonialism with the “spiritual” East, particularly India. India became “a topic of learning, discovery and practice” (Said 1995, 73). Europeans came to India in

search for childlike innocence, a vision of wholeness, a yearning for the recovery of what the poets and philosophers of the period felt the age has lost, namely a oneness with humankind and a oneness with nature, and for a reunification of religion, philosophy, and art which has been sundered in the modern Western world. (Clark 1997, 54-55)

The allure of the East was concomitant with its denigration, as Asia evolved into a symbol encapsulating the mysterious and remote, while also instilling fear and embodying the Western subconscious where all that is obscure, unspoken, feminine, sensual, suppressed, resided (Batchelor 1994, 234). The theme of cultural dissension between the Eastern and Western nations is a much older phenom-



enon and can be traced back to the era of Herodotus and the epic clash between Greeks and Persians, which led to the legendary distinction between the “heroic, liberty-loving and dynamic West and the despotic, stagnant and passive East” (Clark 1997, 4). Despite concerted efforts to transcend the East-West schism in pursuit of fostering intercontinental dialogues, this enduring Occident-Orient dichotomy persists conspicuously in contemporary times, particularly within the realm of interpersonal relationships. My paper will attempt to explore the negation of any possibility of East-West confluence in Pankaj Mishra's *The Romantics* (1999), its theme being in continuity with E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924). Mishra's *The Romantics* shows the impossibility of any form of relationship between Samar, the protagonist of the novel and Catherine, the girl he falls in love with, because of profound disparities in cultural values and incongruities in their philosophical outlooks on love and life. While Forster underscored the fundamental failure of connection which lies at the core of East-West relationships, Mishra's *The Romantics* provides poignant insights into the dissonance in value systems between the East and the West, highlighting the persistent cultural discord despite the professed cosmopolitanism of the contemporary era. Despite the acclaim surrounding Homi Bhabha's concept of “hybridity” (1994, 4) and Mary Louise Pratt's idea of the “contact zone” (1991), even after the passage of seventy-five years since Forster's seminal work, Mishra's *The Romantics* reaffirms the enduring relevance of the “hundred voices” in Forster's narrative, echoing the resounding chorus of “No, not yet.” It resounds with the echoes of the sky proclaiming, “No, not there” (Forster 1924, 317).

The dichotomy between Catherine's ostensibly “progressive” mindset and Samar's wistful nostalgia for bygone eras and adherence to tradition forms a central thematic contrast within the narrative. Samar's yearning for times past extends beyond a mere fondness for the historical context of Benares, the city where he once luxuriated in the “pure time of desires and dreams” upon his initial arrival in a decrepit riverside abode (276). Concurrently, Samar's nostalgia is deeply rooted in his personal history, particularly his intimate familial connection and a lamentation for the evaporation of the coherence and wholeness that once characterized his parents' lives. Samar's educational trajectory, which meandered through various unremarkable small-town schools across India (8), eventually led him to follow in the academic footsteps of three successive generations of his maternal lineage by enrolling at Allahabad University. Samar's mother, in her twilight years, made a deliberate choice to relocate to a spiritual enclave in Benares, an act aligned with an age-old Hindu belief system positing that death in Benares signifies liberation from the cycle of rebirth—an irrefutable and sacred tenet (69). In parallel, following the demise of Samar's mother, his father, with an aura of inscrutability, embarked on a comparable journey of withdrawal from the world by seeking solace within the tranquil confines of Auroville in Pondicherry. This esoteric choice required no elucidation, as it adhered to a venerable rite of passage: the retreat into the self during the twilight of one's years. In the face of these choices, Samar and his contemporaries rarely questioned or demanded explanations; such decisions mirrored an unwavering adherence to time-honored traditions and held an aura of unquestionable sanctity. While V.S. Naipaul, in his second installment of the Indian Trilogy, *The Wounded Civilization* (2010[1977]), had previously adopted a disparaging stance toward these concepts of renunciation and the retreat to the self, Pankaj Mishra's protagonist, Samar, nostalgically reflects upon this bygone era. Estranged from his family, and their coherent past, Samar leads a “restless and lonely” existence in Banaras, in a rented house, spending “the longest time at the university library” (75). Gradually, he forms tenuous bonds with fellow tenants, prominently among them European tourists such as Miss West, Mark, Catherine, and her Indian paramour Anand.

Samar's profound discontentment and burgeoning sense of inferiority spring from his gradual pursuit of contentment through his newfound acquaintances. The chasm between the cultural milieu he had known, shared by most Hindus in India, and the European tourist culture becomes conspicuously apparent during an encounter with Miss West. At the mere mention of a “party,” Samar's initial mental tableau conjures images of “noisy, half-naked revellers... empty frivolity and moral laxity of which I had been brought up to disapprove” (9). However, the actual event transpires

as a musical gathering, wherein Samar keenly observes the dynamics of casual discourse, mirthful camaraderie, epicurean feasting, and libations. It is here that he becomes “increasingly aware of the strangeness the occasion held for me” (9). Samar grapples with the dissonance between this newfound revelry and the serene milieu of his upbringing, characterized by the tranquil customs of traditional Brahmin culture. He wistfully recollects Sunday mornings when his father, after a refreshing bath, would sit bare-chested on a tiger skin rug before a fragrant sandalwood fire, reciting Vedic hymns—a modest homage to the grand ceremonies of their forebearers spanning generations. These venerable traditions use to instill in Samar profound reverence and admiration. Samar’s moral compass and worldview were fundamentally shaped by this distinct upbringing, diverging sharply from the European milieu in which he sought fulfillment. His profound familial ties, especially with his mother, stand in stark contrast to the more individualistic disposition exemplified by Catherine. Samar fondly recollects the affectionate receptions and poignant farewells he shared with his mother during school holidays, poignant moments laden with restrained tears under the disapproving gaze of his father (69). In contrast, Catherine, a globetrotter with a penchant for autonomy, shares with Miss West her audacious resolve at the tender age of sixteen to relocate to Germany, undeterred by her father’s objections. Her father’s conservative inclinations, particularly regarding premarital intimacy, evoke her frustration. Catherine’s capacity for independent voyaging across the world further underscores the divergence from Samar’s tightly-knit Indian familial framework, characterized by a robust religious presence at home, an enduring connection to ancestral roots, and profound grief following his mother’s demise. Chadda and Deb (2013) aptly observe the cultural distinction, delineating that “unlike Western society, which prioritizes ‘individualism,’ Indian society espouses ‘collectivism,’ emphasizing interdependence and cooperation, with the family as its focal nucleus”. These dissimilar upbringings and cultural frameworks of Catherine and Samar, underscored by their contrasting emotional bonds with family members, ultimately precipitate disparate attitudes toward love and relationships. This incongruity not only affects Samar but also embroils Anand, Catherine’s current paramour, in a web of discontented circumstances. The thematic juxtaposition between Catherine’s ostensibly forward-looking perspective and Samar’s yearning for traditions and historical continuity serves as a fulcrum for the narrative’s exploration of cultural disparities which will lead to Samar’s unhappiness and frustration.

Samar’s yearning for fulfillment within a foreign cultural milieu becomes manifest at the inception of the narrative, as he relocates to Benares with the singular aim of preparing for the Civil Service Examination. However, this ostensibly pragmatic motive swiftly metamorphoses into an intellectual entanglement with European literary works. Samar becomes deeply ensconced in the philosophical treatise *The World as Will and Idea* by Schopenhauer, the writings of Edmund Wilson, and Turgenev’s *Torrents of Spring*. Having an autodidactic disposition, Samar, who had ventured to Benares with the explicit intention “to read, and do as little as possible besides that” (6), actively seeks intellectual gratification within the pages of Western thinkers’ works, thereby further alienating himself from the immediate cultural milieu that surrounds him. However, this phenomenon of alienation from his own cultural milieu concomitantly engenders difficulties in the seamless integration into the intricate fabric of the European societal milieu. His academic voyage is profoundly imbued with a pervasive sense of self-disparagement as he grappled with his limited understanding of the texts he pursued:

I read slowly but understood little of *The World as Will and Idea*. Nevertheless, I soldiered on ... I would look up and let my eyes wander over the thick multicoloured spines and grow impatient at the slow progress I was making, at the long interval that separated me from those other books. (6)

Miss West endeavored to acquaint Samar with Western classical music, and though he did not consistently find himself enraptured by it, he discovered a genuine enthusiasm for the opportunity to engage with the luminaries he had hitherto encountered solely through the written word (55). As time elapsed, Samar’s fascination and proclivity increasingly gravitated towards the “expatriate

corner of Benares – among foreigners” rather than the “uninteresting and petty” university atmosphere (57–58). Mishra adroitly employs metaphorical exposition to expound the manner in which European philosophical and rational traditions, exemplified by the books that Samar fervently devours, supplanted the traditional fabric of Indian religiosity and spirituality. This paradigmatic shift is underscored when Samar articulates how the “big books” assumed dominance within the “small octagonal niches in the whitewashed walls of my rooms where, when I first arrived vermilion-spattered clay dolls of Krishna and Vishnu had stood...” (6). The yearning to embrace foreign culture emanates from an inherent sense of inferiority, a prevalent trait among individuals hailing from formerly colonized nations. Samar’s infatuation extends beyond Catherine herself to encompass the entirety of her cultural milieu. In comparison, all else appears lackluster, with Samar likening Anand to the labyrinthine and dormant alleyways of Varanasi. Catherine herself seemed to inhabit a different world, one that was prosperous and more content than the one she currently resided in (19). Not only Catherine, but Miss West too, represented, for Samar, “the world” that “held” Samar “more than the University” (33). Catherine embodies, in Samar’s eyes, the allure of prosperous Western nations, while the aged Benares, Benares Hindu University, and the dilapidated quarters Catherine has rented, collectively symbolize India. He could feel “a sense of wrongness,” a profound “incongruity of Catherine’s presence in that small room, the French coffee and Gallimard paperbacks surrounded by the teeming obtrusive life of old Benares; there was the incongruity of her relationship with Anand” (48–49). It’s interesting that Samar could sense the strangeness of the intermingling of the East and West, India and Europe and the incongruity that resulted therefrom but could not stop himself from desiring to be a part of Catherine’s world. His station at the “remotest fringes” of the vast and diverse world, coupled with his dearth of economic means and prospects, only intensified his yearning for Catherine’s milieu (65). Realizing his inability to join the conversation of Catherine and her friends, he increasingly “felt the fragility of... [his] own personality... lack of opinions and taste” (89). He harbored anxieties regarding whether he had managed to “impress them [Catherine’s French friends]” (91). Following his encounter with Catherine’s acquaintances, Samar descended into a melancholic state, yearning for the more abundant and fulfilling life that Catherine had perpetually enjoyed and would soon return to after this transient interlude in Benares (93).

While Samar exhibited a genuine enthusiasm for Western culture, it became apparent that Westerners, in turn, did not always exhibit the same degree of respect for Indian culture. Catherine’s mother, when she came to India “would not stop moaning about the dirty cloth the waiter was using to wipe the plates dry” (47) and Catherine, though seems to have an interest in India reveals only a paternalistic attitude when she pacifies her mother saying “...this is the way people live in India, and you have to do the same when you are here” (47). Furthermore, the Director of the French Information Centre issued a caution to Catherine’s mother, warning against her daughter forming “sordid liaisons” with Indian men, whom he depicted as employing French women as mere conduits to access Europe (47). Catherine’s friends had only a “gentle condescension” (91) and their conversation “floundered in prejudice and artifice.” Their perception of India was encapsulated by a lens that cast it as an exotic realm characterized by illiteracy, poverty, and religious fervor. They enthusiastically recounted their experiences in Benares, regaling tales of ascetic sadhus sustaining themselves on a single leg for a decade, limbless beggar children, and the ubiquitous presence of large rats scuttling through alleyways (91). Jacques, another resident in Panditji’s abode, initially harbored a desire to witness the “real India.” His prior bookish knowledge had led him to the erroneous belief that every Indian inherently adhered to Gandhian principles, and that the nation at large existed as an idyllic setting of self-sufficient villages populated by non-violent cotton-spinning denizens. However, his perspective underwent a stark transformation merely two weeks later, as the harsh realities of semi-urban and urban India left him afflicted with food poisoning and dysentery. Within the first week, he abandoned his ascetic aspirations and sought solace in the very five-star hotels he had once criticized (91). Catherine’s friends who had come to India have come with “trained” (76) eyes– with

knowledge gathered from books. It is ironical that Catharine's French friends were so "concerned about the Third World" that they behaved with Anand in the manner of an "uninterested and kindly patron." (89) They have come to India driven by "abstract political passion" (90). Samar also confesses that his knowledge of European social and intellectual backgrounds was primarily derived from books authored by utopian philosophers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as recommended by Edmund Wilson. This dated and mostly irrelevant knowledge only served to further confuse him, as it led him to search for meaning and subtlety where none existed:

I... gobbled down books without any sense of the larger civilization that lay behind them, the hectic world of big cities and writers and publishers, of urgent social concerns and existential anxieties. (49)

The knowledge held by individuals on both sides of the cultural encounter was predominantly theoretical, grounded in scholarly pursuits rather than direct experience. Enlightenment philosophers in Europe gained their understanding of India primarily through the writings of Jesuit missionaries, and this marked the onset of a significant dissemination of information about Indian civilization in Europe during the seventeenth century. As the eighteenth century progressed, discussions and deliberations concerning India took root within intellectual circles in Europe (Clark 1997, 54). However, this academic knowledge about a deeply spiritual nation like India often led to perplexity rather than clarity. The European tourists in the novel often possessed a superficial grasp of India's predominant religions, lacking a profound comprehension of their underlying philosophies, whether it be Hinduism or Buddhism. An illustrative episode involves Debbie, who entertained the idea of converting to Buddhism during a conversation with Sarah. She was confronted by an Indian scholar named Prasad, who emphasized that "people in the West had misconstrued Buddhism" and underscored "how unequipped the Western mind is to receive a philosophy of negation" (14). The Indian scholar was perhaps right because Debbie could not understand the basic principle of negation, as Miss West (who was a little more sensible than the rest) informs Samar that Debbie "gets her parents to send her videos of David Letterman, she misses her dog, all she wants to do in Benares is sunbathe and get a great tan, and then she says she wants to convert to Buddhism. It doesn't make sense" (40). Debbie remains immersed in and addicted to the world while professing to convert to a religion which believes in "a philosophy of negation."

Another instance of limited comprehension of Indian religions, in this case, Hinduism, is exemplified by Catherine. During a visit to Mussoorie, Samar and Catherine encountered a young sadhu adorned in a white dhoti with bare feet and marks of sandalwood paste gracing his broad forehead (128). The sadhu shared his spiritual journey, detailing his sojourn to Gangotri, months of wandering, stays at various ashrams, and his eventual arrival in Kapli (129). When asked about his familial ties, he indicated their absence, elucidating that he had left behind those relationships on his path to spiritual awakening; they belonged to his past. Samar's father, too, had conveyed to him the idea of the "illusory nature of love and attachment" during his childhood by referring to the dialogue between the sage Yajnavalkya and his wife Matreyi in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishads* (71). Samar found the sadhu's life to be "interesting" (131). However, Catherine viewed concepts like detachment, negation, asceticism, renunciation, and celibacy as "weird" (131), as they seemed to lack what she perceived as a crucial element: "love": "It's a life without love. What's interesting about it? Nothing" (131) India's "metaphysical speculations and 'mystical' inclinations of Indian thought conflicted with Enlightenment taste (Clark 1997, 55) of reason and rationality. Catherine and Debbie is a part of that 'enlightened world'. Despite finding themselves in the distinctly Hindu city of Benares, they displayed minimal interest in comprehending the fundamental philosophical tenets of Hinduism. Practices like renunciation were believed to absolve the renouncer of sins, bestow heavenly rewards upon their relatives, and dissolve marital bonds (Olivelle 1992, 71), with celibacy constituting a pivotal element of renunciation (Olivelle 1992, 72). Olivelle (2008) observes:

The primary condition for renouncing the world is the complete severing of all attachments, especially to sensual objects. That detachment or aversion to the world (*vairagya*) is the essential prerequisite for

renunciation is emphasized in all ascetical treatises. The sexual impulse was viewed as the greatest source of attachment and the greatest impediment to progress on the spiritual path. The body itself is viewed as an impure and dangerous place from which the ascetic should seek to flee as from a burning house. (160)

The religio-philosophical tenets of Hinduism, deeply ingrained in the spiritual fabric of India, failed to secure their place in the hearts of Europeans. Consequently, their comprehension of India was inherently flawed from the outset. India, as a profoundly spiritual nation, necessitates an understanding of the philosophical underpinnings of its religions for a comprehensive grasp of its essence. In India, religions, particularly Hinduism, encompass not merely creeds and dogmas but constitute a way of life. To truly fathom India, one must delve into the Indian way of life, characterized not only by the wiping of plates with “dirty cloth,” of which Catherine’s mother moans, but also by these deep concepts of inwardness, negation, renunciation and asceticism. What merits attention is that Samar’s limited and incomplete knowledge of the Western world intensifies his yearning for comprehension and integration with this foreign milieu. Samar aspired to perceive Benares through the lens of Catherine’s perspective. Conversely, Westerners’ incomplete knowledge tended to breed denigration and essentialism. Samar’s desire to imitate or mimic the West and his penchant for flaunting his knowledge of European texts represents the desire for, what I would call (improvising on Fanon’s concept of denegrification (83)) de-Indianization. Samar’s is not Bhabha’s (1984) strategic and ambivalent “mimicry” for the purpose of resistance but an “unconscious wish” i.e. the “wish to be white” (Fanon 74). Dallmayr (1996) observes that “[s]ometimes (perhaps quite frequently), the hegemonic culture holds a powerful attraction for the subordinate groups eager to gain social acceptance or recognition...” (17). What becomes amply clear here is that even though colonialism has ended, decolonization is yet an “unfinished project.” The East continues to experience an inferiority complex and the West continues to see itself as superior. Under such circumstances, when inequality looms large, an East-West encounter is bound to result in failure. According to Robert Park and Ernest Burgess, assimilation may be seen as “a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire memories, sentiments and attitudes of other persons and groups and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated by them in a common cultural life” (Dallmayr 1996, 14). In Mishra’s *Romantics*, the relationship between India and the West betrays any form of “assimilation,” “fusion,” or “common cultural life” is never possible. Not only was Samar eager to be inducted into the Western world, but Anand too was eagerly waiting to move to Paris along with Catherine. Samar explains:

...he [Anand] spoke of this [about his going to Paris] with the curious serenity that I had seen come over him, the serenity that came from his belief that with Catherine by his side, things could not but turn out well for him. Paris had become for him a locus of several desires. He spoke solemnly about the visit as expanding the narrow vision he had inherited from his rustic background; he spoke with childlike enthusiasm about the sold-out concerts he would give, the best-selling recordings he would make. (61)

Anand saw his entry into the Western world as a way of expanding the “narrow vision” which India has given him, which his “rustic background” has given him only to be frustrated at the end when neither the Western world accepts him nor his beloved, Catherine, who rejects him both due his lost prospect in life as well as her sexual wantonness. What is more interesting is that never in the novel is Catherine’s promiscuity described as negative. Miss West at the end of the novel just casually mentions, “[h]er boyfriends kept changing,” (272) as if it was a common culture of the Western world, whereas both Samar and Anand were “stuck” (273). Miss West says,

His [Anand’s] love for Catherine, his time in Paris: this was the greatest thing that could ever happen to him. He only had his past and was trapped by it. Catherine could move on but he was stuck. (273)

A profound divide exists between the Indian conception of love and sexuality and the Western understanding of these concepts. The palpable chasm in effective communication between Eastern and Western cultures originates from the fundamentally disparate philosophical foundations that



underpin their perceptions of love and life. Samar and Catherine, the principal characters in this narrative, epitomize the values of their respective societies but Samar departs from his own background and aspires to get integrated into the other culture. In Samar's case, the physical aspect of love is intimately connected to the emotional aspect of it. It is for this reason that after making love to Catherine, Samar repeatedly asks himself "Is this love" (136)? Whereas in the case of Catherine, the carnal and the affective dimensions of love are independent of each other. This allowed her to engage in physical intimacy with Samar, only to appear emotionally distant and distinct the following day, all the while openly professing her love for Anand without guilt (136).

We must not let Anand know what happened last night. He will not be able to deal with it. It would crush him, and I can't let that happen. I feel responsible for him. I love him too, you know. (139)

Upon their return to Benares from Mussoorie, a profound sense of guilt overwhelmed Samar as he beheld Anand sleeping on the floor. In stark contrast, Catherine, having refreshed herself from the extended journey, displayed eager interest as she perused photographs of her friends captured during their time in Benares, which Anand presented during tea time. Catherine's apparent nonchalance regarding her own infidelity only served to exacerbate Samar's inner turmoil concerning their relationship. Upon their arrival in Benares, Catherine swiftly and seamlessly resumed her former role alongside Anand. This marked a conspicuous deviation from her conduct on the night at Kapli, an indelible memory that had left an enduring impact on Samar. Samar found himself grappling with the disconcerting notion that perhaps Catherine's relationship with him had been relegated to the realm of "inconsequential experiences" (151), a "minor distraction" akin to her dalliances with numerous other men. These liaisons, Samar reasoned, may have served as a means for Catherine to escape what she perceived as the emotional aridity that had characterized her upbringing. Whenever Catherine mentioned Anand, Samar harbored a profound sense of indignation. It gradually dawned on Samar that Catherine's life preceding her arrival in Benares held a more profound sway over her, and the persona marked by ostensibly ordinary concerns assumed greater authenticity and tangibility than the individual who had bestowed upon him the gifts of tenderness and happiness.

Samar found in Flaubert's book *Sentimental Education* something reflecting his own condition. His own thwarted love for Catherine is reflected in the novel's depiction of "ambitious provincial's tryst with metropolitan glamour and disillusion full of subtle satisfaction. He could sense his similarity with the novel's protagonist Frederic Moreau in his own "large, passionate, but imprecise longings, his indecisiveness, his aimlessness, his self-contempt," in his "love affair that go nowhere, of artistic and literary ambitions that dwindle and then fade altogether, of lives that have to reconcile themselves to a slow, steady shrinking of horizon... Something of Hindu fatalism seemed to come off its pages, a sense of life adrift and futility and illusion..." (155). Flaubert's novel indirectly comments on the "futility and illusion" of Samar's desire for Catherine and of the possibility of East-West dialogue. As he came to know of his father's illness through a letter from Pondicherry, he decided to leave Benares; though distressed at the thought of separating from Catherine, he thought that it would put "an end to a time of futility and unhappiness" (179). Yet, even during his sojourn in Pondicherry while awaiting Catherine's promised letter, Samar's thoughts remained consumed by her. When Catherine's missive finally arrived, its contents proved ironic, for it primarily recounted her frustration regarding her physical involvement with Samar. Paradoxically, she lamented their "mischievous adventure" as nothing more than an "instant gratification" (210). However, it is worth noting that Catherine herself later parted ways with Anand. She went on to engage in relationships with an Algerian film maker and, ultimately, a stockbroker, with whom she planned to wed. While Catherine's romantic partners came and went, both Anand and Samar remained ensconced within the confines of her memories. For Samar,

the poisoned past that for many years never left my side, that first clung to me on those aimless travels across the country... the past that scratched old wounds on serene mornings in high mountain valleys



and among the sullen ruins of remote monasteries, the past that long after I settled in Dharamshala and began to heal, pursued me into innumerable exhausting dreams (270–271)

In conclusion, Pankaj Mishra's novel *The Romantics* intricately weaves together the themes of cultural dissonance, unfulfilled desires, and the clash of Eastern and Western values. The world which "fascinated" him "endlessly," the world which appeared "richer and more fulfilled," the world which he tried to "impress," Catherine being the "central force which illuminate[d]" him, gradually turns into a world which is "exhausting" and "poisonous" generating "illusion," "futility," "unhappiness," and "self-contempt." Through the experiences of its characters, particularly Samar, Catherine, and Anand, the novel offers readers a nuanced exploration of the challenges inherent in navigating the complex terrain of cultural differences. The traditional, restrained, rooted and religious background of Samar's life is in no way compatible with the bohemian, global, non-religious and to some extent uncontrolled and wanton life of Catherine. Samar understood this later but his failure of relationship with Catherine left some indelible marks in his heart. Anand too was in the same situation. The unempathetic understanding of Indian notions of love, life, family and religion is bound to end up in frustration for both sides. Mishra's novel reveals in a poignant way the continuing chasm between the East and the West even after the end of colonialism. Ultimately, *The Romantics* is a nuanced portrayal of the limitations of cross-cultural understanding and the enduring relevance of cultural dissonance in an interconnected world. It prompts readers to contemplate the complexities of desire, identity, and the elusive quest for belonging in a world where East and West continue to intersect and collide.

Banaras Hindu University, India

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# The Time of Translation

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ELENA NARDELLI

**Abstract:** In this paper, I analyze the time dimension at play in translation processes. First, I consider the simple time relation between a translation and its original. I then consider the multiple and overlapping relations between the translation and the original in history through a specific case study: the translations of the *Laozi* collected in Micha Tadd's project *Laozegetics*. This move discloses tensions in the "history of translation," which I try to understand with the help of Michel Serres's conceptual tools. Finally, I stress translation's inherent power to erode the present state of things and its intimate relation with possible futures.

**Keywords:** Translation, time, history of translation, Laozegetics

In this paper, I build on a particular diagnosis of our time voiced by Mark Fisher: "What's at stake in 21st century hauntology is not the disappearance of a particular object. What has vanished is a tendency, a virtual trajectory" (19). I claim that, because of its internal structure, translation cannot belong to the present. In its delay, in its *Nachträglichkeit*, in its being *après coup* in relation to the texts to which it refers, translation contributes to eroding the present state of things. It creates a fissure, a juncture, forcing us to think of another temporal dimension. Because of this quality, translation has been an ally of those philosophers who seek to criticize the metaphysics of presence, namely Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida.<sup>1</sup>

In the following, I first discuss the temporality that is unfurled by the simple translation relation. I will then focus on the multiple translation relations in history with the help of a case study: the more than two thousand translations of the *Laozi* collected by Misha Tadd in *Laozegetics*. I then turn to the difficulties and limits of different approaches to the history of translation. Finally, I consider the resources provided by translation when it comes to eroding the present and disclosing possible futures.

## 1. Out of sync

What kind of temporality does translation unfold? When I am translating a Chinese philosophical text dated to around the sixth century BC, in what time am I living? What kind of temporality is hosting me, am I dwelling in? What kind of temporal relation exists between the text I am translating and the text I am writing? What happens to time when we translate?

The translator must deal with at least two temporalities: the temporality of the text she wants to translate and her own temporality, the temporality in which she is living. Furthermore, with her work she is generating a new temporality, that of the resulting translation. The attempt to join these different temporalities brings translation out of sync. It is not in sync with the text on which it operates – translation occurs "after the fact," at a remove from the original – and is not even in sync with the time in which it occurs. It is oriented toward an object that is already there, that is present and comes from the past. The activity of translation seems to reveal the non-contemporaneity of the present time with itself. It takes place in a suspended time, almost outside of time.

At the same time (!), every literary masterpiece is also out of sync, but for another reason: because it is timeless. Because of its timelessness, a work is worthy of translation and – as soon as the operation begins – becomes an original. What does it mean for a work to become an original? If every work is potentially an original, it is only at a certain point in time – in its life, in its history – that translation changes the work retrospectively.

Translation works with a text that is timeless; nevertheless, translation is affected by time. Because it is affected by time, it can affect another text retrospectively, marking and changing its status in time. This is a first signal of how translation affects the time of the original text, generating it as such. Precisely in this relation, translation is posthumous, and, reciprocally, the text becomes its forerunner. It is in this sense that we can read Borges's statement that "every writer *creates* his own precursors. His work modifies our conception of the past, as it will modify the future" (192).

This is especially true of the relation between translation and the "source" text, which becomes a "source" only a posteriori. From the point of view of the translated text, we can invoke Walter Benjamin's conception of translatability: every text is a priori translatable; translatability is an inner property of the text, according to its essence. The question of whether the text can be translated is "apodictic" and goes beyond humanity, beyond the capacities of the human, and beyond human time (16). The text not only allows for translation in itself – even if this translation will never appear in human time, precisely in history – but also demands translation. But why should a text demand translation? And what has this fact to do with time?

Translation, which in creating its source text as source is answering its plea, arises from the source's own temporality, from a kind of extra time (in Benjamin's terminology *Fortleben* and *Überleben*) that belongs to it. The time of the translation has always potentially been there with the text. With the translation, time is dislodged, and translation gives time to what is timeless.

Because it gives time to a timeless object, translation seems to be susceptible to time. And it ages very quickly: "Whereas the originals remain eternally young (whatever the degree of interest we have in them, and however near or far they are in cultural terms), translations 'age' (*vieillissent*)" (Berman 1990, 1).

In this passage, Berman radically differentiates the two temporalities of translations and originals. Originals are "eternally young"; they are timeless – as we have already seen. On the contrary, translations "age," they fade, they are obsolescent.<sup>2</sup> For this reason, it seems that originals can generate effects – e.g. translations, commentaries, glosses – *ad infinitum*, while translations seem sterile and dead-ended; e.g., they seem to lack the property of translatability.

But is it fair to compare the temporality of the two texts? Is it not the case that the original and the translation "exist in two parallel and disparate time spectrums" (Topia 46)?<sup>3</sup> Topia's suggestion that we keep the two time spectrums separate would seem to be an attempt to remedy the actual cultural situation that we also find in Berman's utterance: every time we bring the original and the translation into proximity, the translation looks wrong; it almost needs to excuse itself for not being the original.<sup>4</sup> Our understanding of translation is shaped by the fetishization of the original. According to this model, translation is but a surrogate, a second choice to which we have recourse if we cannot have the original. Translation appears imperfect; it always misses the "true meaning" of the original. This has consequences for the dimension of time: translation has been connected to a past dimension, understood as a digging into the folds of the past with the intent of restoring its own proper meaning.

In Derrida's terms: the original text – as we usually conceive of it – is a specter of the metaphysics of presence:

A striking diversity disperses across the centuries the translation of a masterpiece, a work of genius, a *thing* of the *spirit* which precisely seems to *engineer itself* [s'ingénier]. Whether evil or not, a genius *operates*, it always resists and defies after the fashion of a spectral thing. The animated work becomes that thing, the Thing that, like an elusive specter, *engineers* [s'ingénie] a habitation without proper inhabiting, call it a *haunting*, of both memory and translation. A masterpiece always moves, by definition, in the manner of a ghost. (1995, 18)

The original – in this passage, described by Derrida as the “work of a genius,” a “*thing of the spirit*,” “the Thing” – haunts translation. It is there without being there; its presence is desired but structurally impossible. The original acts as a cause, a unifying focal point of its different translations. The age of translations is then an age inhabited by ghosts that live it without living it, an age that desires the presence of the original meaning. Translations refer to a non-present original that is the source of the presence, whose proper meaning can be indicated, but mostly missed.

Moving from this diagnosis, it seems important to take a path that is the opposite of Topia’s – but that has the same goal – and to study the reciprocity of the temporal relation between the translation and the original. If the translation is not consumed, if it does not age, it will cast a shadow on and replace the source text. It will demand a translation of itself. But isn’t this the way originals arise, e.g. when a translation answers this request?

The path is that of eroding the strict ontological difference between translation and original, recognizing at the origin of the original a translation movement, as suggested by Derrida (1985). I will try to develop this argument, focusing on its implications for the dimension of time.

One of the strongest arguments against this proposal is an empirical one: the difference between the original and the translation resides in the simple fact that the latter cannot be further translated. In Benjamin’s terms, translations do not have the property of translatability. The case study I will consider will refute this argument on the same empirical field. In addition, it will help us to put it into historical perspective: we will discover that translations’ untranslatability is a limited and relatively new praxis in the history of thought. From a diachronic perspective, a translation calls for other translations that do not necessarily refer to the so-called “original” text but often build on previous translations.

## 2. A case study: *Laozegetics*

*Laozegetics* is a project developed by Misha Tadd on the global effects of the Daoist classic *Laozi*. In contrast to traditional studies on the *Laozi*, Tadd adopts an “inclusive perspective,” one that gathers classical Chinese commentaries and the many translations of the *Laozi* within the same project. Thus far, Tadd has identified more than two thousand translations, in ninety-seven languages. In this regard, the project is “global” and aspires to be exhaustive. *Laozegetics* does not seem to derive from encyclopedic aspirations, however. Rather, it seems to be the product of a conceptual shift: from an obsession with the original to the history of its effects. Tadd is all too aware of this radical shift of perspective: a shift of “focus away from the supposed original or ‘true’ text [...]. This move affirms the continuity of the Chinese and non-Chinese traditions of interpretation and positions translations as creative projects instead of flawed simulacra” (Tadd 2022a, 88). Indeed, the historical depth of this project helps us to recognize that fixation on the true ‘original’ is specific to our time: “the Chinese traditionally celebrated the plurality of *Laozi*’s meaning [...]. Even for a Daoist devotee such as Du Daojian [(1237–1318)], the *Laozi* does not exist in eternal unchanging perfection but adapts to the ever-transforming needs of the people. As a result, no singular ‘authentic’ *Laozi* exists” (Tadd 2022b, 5).

*Laozegetics* not only historicizes our idolization of the original but also questions another important contemporary taboo, that of retranslation, that is to say, of translations made from an existing translation rather than from the original text. It shows that retranslations are both common and fruitful. For example, Stanislas Julien’s French translation of the *Laozi* as *Le Livre de la Voie et de la Vertu* (1842) gave rise to an impressive number of translations in European languages, among which the earliest complete English translation. It made the classic Daoist text accessible to a new audience and imprinted its decision to translate “Dao” as “Voie” on all its retranslations, opening up a new path for understanding this key concept of Daoism. This is only one case of many that we find in the *Laozegetics*: the result of a translational process, a translation, in turn became the “source text” for a retranslation. But can we really exclude the possibility that our first “source text” is not itself a translation of a previous text, of which we have lost track?

Moving from Tadd's notion of an "interpretative lineage," let us consider the possibility of tracing "translational lineages" in history. The notion of a "lineage" offers an opportunity to undermine the linear model of knowledge transmission. Translations do not travel in a single direction; they move in parallel, creating a different line at every step: "The *Laozi* did not just travel in a single direction from a single origin" (Tadd 2022b, 11). History itself assumes a branched-out form that proceeds through jumps in time and space. One of the greatest challenges of tracing the history of a given translation is the difficulty of following and producing such a historical temporality: there is a specific characteristic of writing that limits it to linearity. Linear narration is possible only if we start from the end, from the last node, from which we trace the work back retrospectively, giving us the illusion of a straight path. This is why *Laozegetics*, with its more than two thousand translations, puts in place and becomes the model for a nodal conception of history: "Thus, each Chinese or non-Chinese interpretation forms a node within one or more lineage transmitting particular conceptions of the text" (Tadd 2022b, 11). Rather than being linear, this approach is diagrammatic or cartographic, one in which each text – unique in its peculiarity – is a node at which different lineages cross and start, or could start in the future. Indeed, the 580 English translations of the *Laozi* alone provide us with a glimpse into the possibility of "infinite translations" (Tadd 2022a, 99). I will return to this knotty history with the help of Serres in the next section, after having explored the tensions that pervade the "history of translation".

### 3. Translation for history

What is the relation between translation and history? What does the expression "history of translation" mean? In this section, I will follow Christopher Rundle's suggestion, according to which we would do better to ask "not what history can tell us about translation but what translation can tell us about history" (239). If we focus on translations and on translation lineages, what kind of history do we face? We face a knotty history, a history that branches out and constantly revises its diagrammatic form – a history that is difficult to write.

Furthermore, combining the question of translation with the question of history can give rise to a special problem: is translation not a fickle parameter? Is this translation the same as that translation? Is what we today call translation the same as what Cicero or Luther called translation? Can we really compare different translation activities that are far away from each other in space and time? Is Heidegger's work on the Pre-Socratics or on the *Laozi* still a translation?<sup>5</sup> Less vague and more radical: is every translation a unique case per se? Shall we follow Adamo's or Munday's invitation to offer a microhistory of translation based on Carlo Ginzburg's methodological legacy? Or shall we heed Antoine Berman's critique of the Platonic essence of the entire Western translation tradition? In other words, shall we favor a discontinuistic or a continuistic approach?

Microhistory focuses on the lives of specific individuals in their normal exceptionality – e.g. the sixteenth-century Friulian miller Menocchio in Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms* – rather than on general macroprocesses. Such a history proceeds not via analogy but via anomaly (Ginzburg, 532). The contest's peculiarity is stressed, and every historical situation is read as the result of the interaction of specific individualities in their finitude. A microhistory of translation considers the normal anomaly that a specific translational case embodies and stresses its context – or the reconstruction of this context – delving into extra-sources such as "archives, manuscripts and, especially, translator papers, post-hoc accounts and interviews" (Munday).

Belonging to the continuistic approach are those works that accept the commensurability of translation experiences as a premise. These studies stress the constants of translation activities, rather than lingering on the peculiarities of the specific experience. This approach tends to presuppose a transhistorical translational activity that operates immanently in history. The continuistic position presupposes translation outside of history and, as such, sees in translation the unifying factor of



different experiences.<sup>6</sup> To a certain extent, however, a minimal continuistic approach is necessary for doing history as such.

Antoine Berman stresses the “Platonic essence” of translation as it is understood in Western thought, unifying the multiplicity of different translation experiences under a single paradigm:

From its very beginnings, western translation has been an embellishing restitution of meaning, based on the typically Platonic separation between spirit and letter, sense and word, content and form, the sensible and the non-sensible. When it is assumed today that translation (including non-literary translation) must produce a ‘clear’ and ‘elegant’ text (even if the original does not possess these qualities), the affirmation assumes the Platonic figure of translating, even if unconsciously. (2000, 296–297)

What Berman denounces is the traditional predominance of the meaning over the letter in translation across the entire history of Western thought, regardless of the language, epoch, or specific circumstances in which the translation takes place. This is an invariance in the history of translation that has held for over two millennia, with the sole exception of Friedrich Hölderlin’s anomalous translations. Translation is not only a constant in history, but the problematic continuity is in the *way* it has been conceived.

At this point, it may be useful to consider the specific idea of history developed by Michel Serres. In what follows, I will not refer to Serres’s work on translation, *Hermès III*, but to his considerations on the history of science in *Les anamnèses mathématiques*. Translation emerges here as a conceptual tool for better understanding the relation between scientific languages and the systems of different ages. I suggest that we consider things from the other way around and apply to the history of translation the conception of history that Serres proposes in the context of science. Every scientific concept belongs to at least three ages: the age in which the concept appears, the age of its reactivation, and the age of its powerful effects. According to Serres, in the history of science there is a contrast between the historian’s and the scientist’s priorities: the historian investigates the specific role that the concept plays in history without missing any detail in the accumulation of data, while the scientist takes an interest only in the teleological truth (e.g. the current truth) of the concept, disregarding the errors and important parts of the systems that generated that concept. This contrast is insolvable and leads to indeterminism: “either *I know the position of the concept and don’t know its speed*, its particular motion, which is its veracity, or *I know its speed and don’t know its position*” (84).

Serres’s understanding of the history of science helps us to conceive of a more-than-linear historicity for translation, free of any obsession with the original. If we put into chronological order, e.g., the different translations of the *Laozi*, we miss not only their inner relations but also their context, the needs that translation is responding to, and its immediate effects, among other things. Concurrently, if we investigate the translation context, e.g. the context of Heidegger’s translation of the *Laozi*, we open up a discussion with specialists of that period and the author, bypassing the work’s historical trajectory. The historical weaving is necessarily interrupted. Translation can leap over thousand years of translations. It can exclude the entire tradition and open up a different way of understanding it. In special cases, translation can tear apart and retie the knots of the history of Western metaphysics. Serres’s description of the “inventor mathematician” thus also applies to the translator: “in a system that’s a network whose every element is a knot of anachronic diachronies, he is free to cut or retie” (94). By a “knot of anachronic diachronies” Serres means historical objects (diachrony) that also belong to an anachronic dimension, that is to say, to “the fusion of every possible time: times that are unpredictable, determined and overdetermined, irreversible and reversible, finalized and recurrent, connected and always rent, referred to one, two, a thousand origins” (94). The act of translating seems to develop one of the possible temporalities that are virtual in every text. The text’s translatability assumes a strong temporal dimension here. Every translation that can move from the text is different also – and maybe especially – because it has its own specific temporality. Not every translation plays a disruptive, non-linear role in the history of thought; translation is also the way one

specific ontological setting is linearly reiterated, preserved, and confirmed.<sup>7</sup> The translator has the opportunity to cut, but also to confirm the line (and to a certain extent is always confirming some aspects of the tradition).

#### 4. From the future

Translation is one of the means philosophy uses (and has used) for saying the words of the tradition anew and, in doing so, for opening up new regions of thought. Translation is one of the ways in which the unthought and the unspoken come to the fore. The novel stems not from a tabula rasa but – as Leibniz suggests – from the accumulation of the tradition and from its reactivation: “there are veins of gold in these sterile rocks “ (Leibniz et d’Arnauld, 566).<sup>8</sup> Or, forcing Benedetto Croce’s operation on Hegel, it is a way to separate what is living from what is dead. Croce himself was a translator: his translation of Hegel’s *Encyclopedia* launched a new cultural epoch, giving to the Italian philosophical tradition its current vocabulary. Dead and living aspects of the translation’s original are not determined once and for all, because translations allow the text’s other possibilities to open themselves to future unearthing.

We began with the observation that translation is out of sync with its time. Like Heidegger’s poet – that is to say, Friedrich Hölderlin – the translator speaks of what has passed, announcing in “the pre-saying that is a saying-after (dictating something that is heard)” (2000, 37). The activity of translating collects different temporalities within itself. From the point of view of the so-called “target text,” translation is a retroactive move, an activity that addresses the past and digs into it. In this digging, translation can preserve the text’s lineage or lead to a crossroads, generating an unheard parallel history of the text. From the point of view of the so-called “source text,” translation comes from the future, shaping it anew. Translation substantially interferes with its life: it transforms its – newborn – original into one of the possible forms disclosed by its translatability. The way in which this specific transformation takes place is not determined a priori. Translation, through a kind of maieutics, nurtures certain possibilities within the text and excludes others. But it does not definitively orient its future. The possibilities remain untouched, open to new future translations.<sup>9</sup> Stepping into the future it creates, translation reveals other possible futures at every moment of its linear history. If necessary, translations can also play a crucial part “in undermining the present state of things” (Fisher, 18).

*University of Padova, Italy*

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> I discuss this alliance in Nardelli (2021). On Heidegger and translation, see Illetterati, Giometti, Sallis. On Derrida and translation, see Foran, Davis, Benjamin (1989).

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘obsolescent’ can help us to recall that, in the contemporary era, translations are commodities of the cultural industry, and their ways of being (quality, form, standard) depend on the material conditions of this industry.

<sup>3</sup> Developing Topia’s argument, we might also add that the original cannot be accused of ageing, because it usually serves at the same time as a criterion for the canonization of the specific language in which it is written. A masterpiece shapes its own language and becomes one of its own reference points.

<sup>4</sup> As efficaciously summarized by Mounin: “All arguments against translation are limited to one: it is not the original” (13).

<sup>5</sup> On Heidegger's translation of the *Laozi*, see the doubts of Paul Shih-yi Hsiao: "I have to admit this – I could not during our work together get free from a slight anxiety that Heidegger's notes might perhaps go beyond what is called for in a translation. As an interpreter and mediator this tendency unsettled me" (98).

<sup>6</sup> It is again Rundle who offers an important suggestion: "The assumption that necessarily underlies histories of translation, that there is a kind of organic unity to the activity of translation and that the experiences of different translators in different historical contexts are implicitly linked and comparable, is both debatable and essentially ahistorical" (236).

<sup>7</sup> I will not take into consideration the specific way in which Heidegger understands the history of translations. He focuses on historically decisive translations, calling them "essential translations," that is to say, those translations that mark the passage from one being's era to another, confirming and deepening its misunderstanding (1997, 145).

<sup>8</sup> The passage is evoked, even if not explicitly quoted, in Serres in relation to the translation of the languages of science: "The new language is at the same time anterior and posterior of the prior one. It makes it explode, cut it, filters it, eliminates its impurities, preserves in it only the gold of its mathematicity" (105).

<sup>9</sup> The future dimension of the work of art is stressed by Justo in *Inversão de marcha*. Hrnjez (192) compares the movement of translation with that of Klee's *Angelus Novus* in the reading that Benjamin gives of it in the *Theses on the Philosophy of History*.

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# Transmediality vs. Intermediality in a Transcultural Context

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FRANCESCA MEDAGLIA

**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to investigate the role that transculturality plays when moving across different media, with a specific focus on rising media on international platforms and convergence, in the context of recent critical theory. The final decade of the twentieth century saw the unfolding of a revolution in television, the outcome of which is what Mittell has called “complex TV”; this has yielded increasingly complex television series. TV series have become the leading form of storytelling, able to stretch along lengthy narrative arcs, over extended periods of time; in several cases, such series also manage to remain locally connoted. In this light, current transmedial Italian Crime fiction can be considered a strong case study, specifically given its ability to develop stories by inserting specific local customs within an ample, international horizons. Transculturality and transmediality/ intermediality will be evaluated in the context of this sub-genre, also in light of the international acclaim garnered by several such series; for example: *Inspector Montalbano* (Rai 1, 1999–), *Gomorra* (Sky, 2014–2021), and *Suburra* (Netflix, 2017–2020). Transculturality will instead be used to evaluate the extent to which the categories of transmediality and intermediality overlap or remain conceptually separate.

**Keywords:** transculturality, intermediality, transmediality, storytelling

## 1. The Time of Convergence and Storytelling

The aim of this article is to investigate the notion of transculturality from a theoretical perspective so as to understand whether there is an overlap between the theoretical frameworks of intermediality and transculturality or whether these are conceptually separate. To do so, transculturality will be considered within the context of the expansions and crossings among media which characterize contemporary storytelling, especially when the latter is in serial form. Multimedia projects’ movement towards interactivity, which has recently been both encouraged and practiced widely, pushes to go the boundaries of a given text. This not only favours transmedial production, but it also ruptures cultural frontiers, encouraging transculturality. (Benvenuti 2018, 109).

The most immediate step is reaching an understanding of the theoretical tools that can be used to study the negotiation between medial and cultural differences. The notion of medium has recently been reconfigured, moving beyond its early definition in the late twentieth century, so as to include processes of remediation. This has led to the use of new methodologies, which are generating a novel understanding of previous media as these attempt to reinvent themselves in light of contemporary needs (Bolter e Grusin 2000, 15).

Current TV series are being shaped by a variety of centripetal forces. As a result, they can be reframed in multiple, decontextualized, and reappropriated ways. This in turn invites a reconceptualization of the methodologies used thus far to study the genre. In this light, it is important to consider the way that the interconnectedness of culture and media repurposes products within a new media system.



Contemporary tendencies towards convergence have undoubtedly had an impact on narrative techniques; the simultaneous presence of grassroots approaches coming from bottom-up growth and top-down demands has raised issues in terms of both narrative structures and the analysis of the narrative which are specific to mediamodernity and, in turn, TV seriality. Such convergence is a process which takes place as a result of two pushes coming from opposite directions: “convergence, as we can see, is both a top-down corporate-driven process and a bottom-up consumer-driven process. Corporate convergence coexists with grassroots convergence” (Jenkins 2006, 18). When it comes to media in contemporary culture, the idea of convergence is matched by the idea of remediation, meaning that a single medium is unable to work in isolated fashion and appropriates techniques, forms, and meanings that belong to other media, reshaping them. According to Bolter and Grusin, in feeling threatened by new technologies, over time, traditional media, be these electronic or print, have tried to affirm the need for their existence, reaffirming their role within the cultural horizon (Bolter e Grusin 2000, 5). All these contingencies lead to the possibility of construing narratives that reflect the contemporary medial apparatus in their complexity.

As a result, storytelling has become faster and more diverse in that it works on the extension or expansion of the story-world that revolves around its original matrix and upon which something new is added each time the medium shifts. Each expansion then is a new textual expression that adds complexity and depth to the original text (Mallamaci 2018, 47). As a result, each individual product also constitutes a window into the complex world of the full narrative (Jenkins 2006, 95), expanding the scope of its fruition. This is particularly true given that certain media are more suited than others to specific audiences. According to Giovagnoli, for instance, the purpose of contemporary storytelling is to create ‘imaginative universes’ that evolve across story-worlds which are, in turn, built through different stories across media, in large production projects managed across complex communication systems. These are “content orchestras” whose sheet music is played at the same time by texts, audiovisual material, videogames, interactive games, graphic tales, sounds, both physical and digital, experienced either in the real world or virtually, alone or in interactive mode (Giovagnoli 2000, 139).

In this light, in the context of TV series, each contemporary narrative would be configured within transmedial storytelling in a more or less obvious manner. According to Jenkins, this “represents a process where integral elements of a fictional story are dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story” (Jenkins 2011). Convergence can thus be situated at the heart of each change or movement in the horizon of new media; so much so, that Jenkins defines contemporary culture as a culture of convergence (Jenkins 2006, 2-3). De Sola Pool already defined convergence as a series of processes that are blurring the confines between media (de Sola Pool 1983, 23). Cultural convergence is a comprehensive process: “there will be no single black box that controls the flow of media in our homes. Thanks to the proliferation of channels and the portability of new computing and telecommunication technologies, we are entering an era where media will be everywhere” (Jenkins 2006, 16).

It can be argued that the advent of new media has compelled storytelling itself to reconsider its nature: contemporary seriality is able to develop very long plots, allowing the agents within such plots to morph over a long, highly intricate narrative arc; further, since a serial show is usually experienced within the intimacy of a home, the viewers can develop a bond rooted in familiarity and intimacy with the narrative (Sepinwall 2014, 461-475). This novel framework has caused a sort of revolution in television; within it, a contemporary series must: be original, i.e. experiment with language or narrative patterns; have a narrative structure which includes memory of itself; have a textual complexity that feeds on meta-textual and self-referential allusions; have an engaged audience, one not limited to the condition of the viewer but engaging as an agent in the series’ development through different media (Maio 2009, 16); refute the need to adhere to conclusive plots; give life to stories that span across genres; and produce a cumulative narrative that expands over time (Mittell 2017, 47).

Contemporary narratives have thus changed; it seems that a noteworthy preference for television over other media is emerging. If previously the demarcation between a TV series (consisting in self-contained episodes) and a serial show (with a continuous story) was clear, over the past 30 years these two fields have begun to bleed into each other (Mittell 2017, 14): this is the consequence of the birth of a complex serial narrative model. In this respect, the storytelling stems from the idea that a TV series generates a lasting narrative world, peopled with a coherent group of characters who live through events in a specific temporal arc (Mittell 2017, 24). Given the medium's easy, daily access to episodes, the characters become an integral part of the audience's lives; this is true to the point that a deep level of empathy is created between audience and characters, driven and amplified by the specific characteristics of metamodern storytelling (Vittorini 2017, 201). Television seems to be most congenial to such narratives, especially when these are of noteworthy complexity, such as those within which transcultural overlapping occurs.

## 2. Glocalism and adaptations

In the field of media studies, there is a dominant tendency to recognize the relative supremacy of the United States (Benvenuti 2018, 111); the latter implies the risk of a relative cultural imperialism which could slowly drive towards an increasingly homogeneous culture (Schiller 1976). The renewed narrative and serial structures mentioned previously seem to be edging towards representations that are both local and global; so much so, that recent studies speak of glocalization (Robertson 1995), or rather, a simultaneous push towards homogeneity and national specificity (Manzato 2018). This is probably the outcome of the changes caused by the rise of new media and the remediation of old media; both have had an impact on television since the late 1990's, favouring the circulation of global formats while establishing a variety of procedures to adapt such formats to national contexts.

The combination of global formats, national production companies, and local adaptations has generated what is now defined as "indigenous paradigm" or a process through which forms and expressions belonging to foreign cultures elaborated in foreign societies are appropriate, reshaped, and shared across specific, different local communities in a manner that is consistent and synoptic with autochthonous systems of meaning (Buonanno 1999, 5).

TV series therefore exist in flux between local and global TV, often spawning hybrid products, within which foreign and native elements can coexist. Such adaptations bend the original content to fit local forms matching the tastes of local audiences.

Within the Italian TV series' market, there is a tendency to import products from abroad and then reconfigure them to fit the needs of an internal market. The adaptation that thus takes place requires the search for a balance between loyalty to the original story and variations that are consistent with and can enhance its core. In this light, a respect for the original core is a strength, which renders the localization process effective. The adaptation, therefore, is not a process encouraging cultural homogeneity; rather, it is a process through which different cultures interact, exchanging information and perspectives in a chain of indebtedness. We are faced with a kind of "critical transculturalism" (Smith 2008), which values the elements in each culture while generating a hybrid.

There are four types of transnational production in contemporary television (Hilmes 2013; Perkins e Verevis 2015) which are represented in products they generate: *imported series*, which are produced in a national context and sold internationally, broadcast in their original form; *reality television* (such as game shows and lifestyle programs) in which the central core remains intact but secondary elements are recreated; *adapted series* which are further subdivided into *creative* and *controlled*, depending upon the degree of adherence to the original core; and, finally, *format fiction*, which implies a high degree of re-creation while adhering to a guiding text.

Telling stories is becoming an increasingly complicated activity, this is further stretched by the audience's demands, which are increasingly varied and pressing. Stories today are imported and exported, adapted, and retold, in continuous multiplication: storytelling seems to have reached its

peak, becoming central in contemporary medial society, breaking free from strictly literary confines (Meneghelli 2013, 9). This seems to be configuring a turning point in narrative forms, which is reshaping both the methodologies and the objectives of media studies (Meneghelli 2013, 29).

### 3. Intermediality vs. Transmediality

Within this renewed and highly transcultural framework, two terms, often used interchangeably, appear: intermediality and transmediality. These terms also yield further permutations leading to the rise of an intricate, at times impervious, terminological jungle (Rajewsky 2018, 1). Intermediality and transmediality are often undifferentiated and used as synonyms. According to Rajewsky, the concept of intermediality rests on the idea of *in between*; this is found in its prefix *inter*. This creates a subtle difference with respect to other correlated terms (such as *trans*-mediality, *multi*-mediality, *con*-vergence, *re*-mediation). In these cases, the prefixes touch upon different nuances of meaning within complex medial relationships (Rajewsky 2018, 6).

In terms of differentiating use, instead, intermediality was the term that seemed more useful in earlier years, garnering attention in critical discourse in the final twenty years of the past century; this was a reflection of its versatility (Rajewsky 2014; Fusillo 2015). It was already used by German academics in the early 1980's (Hansen-Löve 1983) and it gained popularity on a larger scale in the following decade. Three different theoretical categories fall under the umbrella term intermediality (Fusillo 2015): intermedial transposition, which consists in cinematic adaptations of literary texts; medial combinations or multimедiality, which consists in blending two or more media together; intermedial allusions, or references to a different, specific medium, within a literary text (Rajewsky 2018, 7).

More recently, instead, terms such as convergence, crossmediality and transmediality are gaining prominence and are being used more frequently; this is also a result of the recent studies by Jenkins e Mittell mentioned earlier. The important attention received by studies on *transmedial storytelling* also seems to have played a hand in this shift. The latter is also the effect of the commercial success of specific franchises which have promoted the use of terms such as transmedia, transmedial, and transmediality (Jenkins 2006, 334).

It would therefore seem that the dominant current tendency is to replace *intermediality* with *transmediality*<sup>1</sup>: in many cases, however, the term transmediality is used independently from the term intermediality (Herman 2004; Jenkins 2006) or as a complementary term (Rajewsky 2018). These two semantic fields – intermediality and transmediality – are expanding in response to new media (especially when used for an existing story) and are therefore constantly in need of new definitions:

The assumption underlying Barthes's mythography is that the metamorphic quality of literature consists in and is developed through historically-varied narrative frameworks, through the story's anamorphic potential, whose openness to being assigned to any matter and supported by any language would render the overcoming of any semantic boundary possible (*inter*-). A story is ubiquitous and eternal in that it extends in spacetime as much as humankind does, transcending and in a way overcoming the limitations set by a given culture or medium. To the media indicated by Barthes, one must add TV, videogames, stories on the web and all cross-medial hybrids of these (Vittorini 2019, 8).

In this regard, *postclassical narratology*, also known as transmedial narratology, has witnessed a change in perspective: unlike traditional scholars of narratology, whose focus was primarily the study of literature and, more specifically, what anglophone culture refers to as fiction (novels; short stories; novellas; fairy tales etc.), scholars of transmedial narratology tend to widen the field of inquiry. As such, they consider narrative forms across their different phenomenological manifestations: literary and non-literary texts; film; documentaries; plays; comic strips; graphic novels; videogames; blogs; as well as the narrative potential included in paintings; sculptures; architecture; music without forgetting the narrative strategies introduced by transmedia storytelling (Rajewsky 2018, 4).

Transmedial storytelling is a narrative form that crosses different media but within which each single expanded text or product contributes specifically and importantly to the whole: each medium can give access to the full franchise (Jenkins 2006). In this respect, differentiating between transmediality and crossmediality becomes relatively simple in spite of an apparent conceptual overlap. This is due to the fact that the logic underlying crossmediality, which finds its prime expression in digital culture, is that its content is developed through a web of promotion and allusion which each medium creates with respect to the others, thereby increasing the brand thus constituted. Conversely, it does not produce an extension of the narrative; this indeed is a characteristic of transmedial storytelling, where each new product distributed across media produces a narrative extension of the core, enriching the audience's experience (Mallamaci 2018, 48). Unlike crossmediality, transmediality aims to expand the narrative. This process is defined by Jenkins in terms of oppositions. *Spreadability vs drillability*, reflects the audience's capacity to spread media content in the first case, and the expansion of its economic and cultural worth in the second. *Continuity vs multiplicity* reflects the presence of a coherent narrative thread in the first case, and the potential for possible alternatives and variations in the second. *Immersion vs extractability* reflects the immersive quality of the experience in the first case, and the potential for its confines to be breached, bringing its elements into the real world in the second. *Worldbuilding* reflects the transmedial extensions that serve the purpose of deepening the narrative world to which they belong; *seriality* reflects the interruption of a long narrative arc into fragments; *subjectivity* reflects the potential for the narrative to be viewed from different perspectives to portray alternatives; and, finally, *performance* reflects the capacity for the narrative extensions to involve the fanbase making the audience part of the transmedial experience (Jenkins 2009).

The studies presented thus far clearly indicate intermediality's specific focus on all interactions or interferences that constitute relationships *between* media, while transmediality relates to interactions and interferences that happen *across* media and are hence relevant to a similar degree across various media, or, better, that are perceived or understood by the viewer as similar or comparable (Rajewsky 2018, 9).

There is hence a poignant difference between intermediality and transmediality, although the categories are related and there is a grey area between the two. It can be useful, therefore, to use them as overlapping terms so as to examine media products from both perspectives. Intermediality and transmediality are not mutually exclusive; conversely, a combined approach can be conducive to more precise analyses, depending upon the line of inquiry.

#### 4. Contemporary Italian Transmedial and Transnational Crime Fiction

There are several examples of intermedial transpositions that include a transmedial approach. The adaptation of a novel, for instance, is an intermedial product that raises questions in terms of the use specific narrative structures within television seriality and, in this respect, crosses into transmedial narratology. Adaptations of novels for TV often stem from the text itself and refer to it, thereby constituting an intermedial process. From a transmedial perspective, intermedial references can be considered a relevant practice; similarly, from a transmedial perspective, the inclusion of intermedial processes is always possible (Rajewsky 2018, 16).

More generally, the narrative structure is the part that emerges as most distinctive in the adaptation process, in that different segments are developed in relation to a specific national model. In this light, Italian contemporary transmedial crime fiction, including series such as *Inspector Montalbano* (Rai 1, 1999–), *Gomorra* (Sky, 2014–), and *Suburra* (Netflix, 2017) can offer an interesting field of studies both in terms of transculturality and transmediality. Interestingly, the notion of glocalism, as theorized by Damrosch (2009), was used in a recent volume entitled *Crime Fiction as World Literature*, edited by Damrosch Theo D'haen and Louis Nilsson (2017). The three Italian series listed

above have been rated by audiences as “quality series” (Re 2020); the elements they have in common are: an origin in literature; remarkable writing and directing; and a wide-spectrum focus in production (Manzato 2018).

Contemporary crime fiction seems to tend to use two divergent patterns simultaneously: elements of local colour to attract an international audience and formal structures typical of the genre on a global scale to garner the attention of local audiences (Pagello 2020, A32). This has resulted in the rise of glocalism which, given its expanse, includes both the intent to export local customs and that to import global issues into a national context (Hedberg 2017, 20).

Both of these glocal elements characterize the series *Inspector Montalbano*. The TV series has a prestigious literary origin, giving it authorial strength; the latter is matched by the choice in director – Alberto Sirioni from 1999 to 2019 (year of his death), followed by Zingaretti, who also performs as the titular lead. Within the series, both Sicily and Italy take a prominent role as part of a larger space, the Mediterranean, seen as the seat of a type of cultural hybridization founded on the encounter and contrast between different peoples, on colonization, migration, and commerce” (Pagello 2020, A 36). The very choice of the protagonist’s name, Montalbano, places the work in conversation with the series set in Barcellona, featuring detective Pepe Carvalho written by Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, who has been identified as a forerunner of the “Mediterranean noir” (Izzo 2006; Pagello 2020). Three elements from Montalbán’s stories recur in Camilleri’s: the celebration of the Mediterranean – in the first case, Barcellona, in the second, Vigata; the importance given to the political context – in the first case, a lingering memory of Franco, in the second, the present; and, finally, the value given to local gastronomy<sup>2</sup> (Pagello 2020, A37).

The value that Camilleri gives the transcultural potential of Mediterranean culture emerges as a result of the synergy between the three elements listed above and the language, he invents which, by simplification, can be said to consist in a mixture of Italian, Sicilian dialect, and an invented tongue. Such use of language is the typical outcome of hybridization in regions found on the confine between nations, in an open space between southern Europe and North Africa (Mauri 2016). The work’s intermedial footprint is broached by Camilleri himself in the final leg of the literary volumes featuring Montalbano, *Riccardino* (2020). Here, Montalbano defines himself as ‘real’ with respect to his counterpart on television. Alongside the main conflict, the novel develops a stringent confrontation between its protagonist and his double on television. The idea of the double, on both a diachronic and diatopic level, has always been central in literature; however, in this case the transmedial dimension makes this idea more compelling. This aspect allows for the works to address specific issues raised by the use of the medium itself: literary Montalbano feels that he is at a disadvantage when competing with his television double specifically because of the medium within which each exists. In the story, Livia, Montalbano’s long-term partner, and he have an argument about a choice of location for their holidays and, to strike him where it hurts, she mentions his double:

“Stavo pensando che il tuo alter ego televisivo, che è più giovane di te, invece è rimasto fedele a se stesso. ‘Na cutiddrata ‘n mezzo al petto sarebbi stata meno dularosa. “A proposito, Livia, ma a te non ti scoccia vedere in televisione un’attrice che ti scimmiotta”. “No, perché? Non mi scimmiotta per niente. E comunque ti ricordo che non sono stata io a raccontare all’Autore i fatti tuoi e miei”<sup>3</sup> (Camilleri 2020, 102).

Camilleri also intervenes in the narrative to comment on the relationship between the two Montalbano:

In altre parole, hai voluto fottere il personaggio televisivo, negandogli la possibilità di arricchirsi di certe sfumature. Non è così?”. “Mi hai chiamato per dirmi che hai fatto questa grande scoperta? Che io voglio differenziarmi dall’altro?”. “Non si tratta solo di questo, Salvo. Io in un certo senso ti capisco, tant’è vero che all’inizio di questa storia ho fedelmente riportato la tua insofferenza, il tuo disagio verso il Montalbano televisivo, mentre potevo benissimo non parlarne. Però t’ho ad avvertirti che ti stai mittendo sopra ‘na mala strada”: “Spiegati meglio”. “Paragonarti a lui o, peggio, sfidarlo non è cosa”. “Perché?”. “Perché tu sei tu e lui è lui”. “E facili per tia che campi supra a tutti e dū! Certo che ti conveni tinirici siparati e diversi!”<sup>4</sup> (Camilleri 2020, 121–122).



Montalbano's case is certainly not unique in Italy, here, the distribution of TV series internationally is always developed through a web of different layers, including production, screenwriting (Anselmi 2022, 8–9), directing, and marketing strategies all targeting foreign markets. These elements distinguish series that aim to enter an international market from those that are developed exclusively for the national market (Re, 2020). The former are categorized as 'prized' products (Lotz 2017, 37), products that attract the audience because of these special traits (Pagello 2020, A39).

*Inspector Montalbano*, *Gomorra* and *Suburra* all share such special traits; they also all come from highly successful literary works. In the case of *Gomorra*, the original text comes is a fictionalized version of a piece of investigative journalism, having immediate transmedial (Benvenuti 2018) and transcultural resonance. In the case of all three series, their strong local elements are workable on the foreign market. Prior to *Gomorra*, *Criminal Novel – The Series* (Sky, 2008–2010), had a similar impact; it too was born as a novel which was subsequently turned into film and, later, into TV series (Boni 2013) garnering success in across media. This same transmedial process brought to the cinematic renditions of *Gomorra* (2008) and *Suburra* (2015), which were both distributed on an international market.

The success obtained by these franchises derives from the fact that these products aptly represent a kind of glocalism which mingles the communication of local situations internationally with the use of patterns recognizable on a global scale but set in Italy.

The Italian crime fiction series discussed above have a prominent glocal character; this is due in great part to the participation of a transcultural production, aiming to attract an international audience, thus targeting its tastes while keeping precise local elements in place. The transmedial transposition products born as novels reach a level of expansive transmedial storytelling which makes each individual medium a different portal onto the franchise, while keeping the whole cohesive through the different modalities and platforms employed.

Sapienza Università di Roma, Rome

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The same occurred in the case of interculturality a transculturality cfr. Meyer, Simanowski, Zeller 2006.

<sup>2</sup> This is done not only with the inclusion of the main characters' passion for food but, in Montalbano's case, also with the publication of a book of recipes (Pagello 2020, A 37).

<sup>3</sup> "I was thinking that your alterego on television, who is younger than you are, is still the same person". A blow to my chest would have been less painful. "By the way, Livia, are you not bothered to see an actress parroting you on TV?" "No because she does not parrot me at all. I would like to remind you that I was the one to tell the author all my secrets". My translation.

<sup>4</sup> "In other words you wanted to mess with the television character by denying him the possibility of making use of specific nuances. Is that so?". Did you call me to tell me you discovered this great secret? That I want to be different from that other one?". "No it is not just this, Salvo. I understand you to a certain extent; so much so, that at the beginning I dutifully reported your annoyance, your discomfort, with the TV Montalbano, while I could have kept my peace. But I have to warn you, you are on a slippery slope": "I need more details". "Measuring yourself against him, or, worse yet, challenging him, is dangerous". "Why?" "Because you are you and he is him". "Easy for you to say; you profit from both of us! Of course you want us to be separate and distant!". My translation.

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# Mapping Arabic Dystopian Novels: Double-Edged Sword

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RAWAD ALHASHMI

**Abstract:** This article explores the literary trajectory of dystopia from Western to Arabic literature and vice versa, seeking to reveal a double-edged aspect of the genre, particularly in the works of Basma Abdel Aziz's *The Queue* (2013) and Mohammad Rabie's *Otared* (2014). I examine how these texts reflect Western influences while simultaneously engaging with the status quo in post Arab Spring countries. By drawing on Edward Said's "Travel Theory" and David Damrosch's "double refraction" metaphor, I seek to highlight the round-trip journey of dystopia from Western to Arabic literature and its transformation to the global capital. Equally important, I discuss the role of translation in influencing the development of Arabic dystopia and refracting it back to its origin, albeit dynamically. Here, translation assumes significance in the bilateral influence of the genre, particularly the dynamic absorption of Western forms in the Arabic dystopian novels that manifest these with the existing sociopolitical conditions while refracting such grisly circumstances onto global literary capital.

**Keywords:** Dystopia, translation, literary travel, genre, Arabic novel

## Introduction

The emergence of dystopian novels in the new millennium constitutes a groundbreaking development in modern Arabic literature. Influenced by the translation of Western dystopian literature, the rise of the genre has been triggered by revolutionary changes in the socio-political spheres in many parts of the Arab-speaking world. Several novelists, including Basma Abdel Aziz and Mohammad Rabie have adopted dystopia to engage with ongoing circumstances after the Arab Spring.<sup>1</sup> In an interview titled "Islam and Sci-Fi," Ada Barbaro argues that the Arab Spring has unequivocally impacted the production of dystopia, giving "voice to a sense of dramatic disappointment or delusion for the results of this revolutionary movement." Meanwhile, Sinead Murphy opines that a new literary mode is necessary to investigate the underlying motive for the uprisings in several Arab societies. This need is fulfilled by dystopian narratives, which represent very public protests against totalitarianism. Murphy discusses Ahmed Khaled Towfik's *Utopia*, Abdel Aziz's *The Queue*, and Rabie's *Otared*, arguing that each text reflects a "significant variation in lived experiences of the uprisings, and the diverse perspectives on its outcomes across the region." However, she dismisses the role of translation in circulating dystopian fiction from the Anglophone to the Arabophone and vice versa. Indeed, the genre shapes its narrative not only from within but also from without—precisely, the internal factors can be attributed to the consciousness of local writers in dealing with complicated situations and the rapid changes in the wake of the Arab Spring, whereas the external factor is that of Western influence, which cannot be ignored.<sup>2</sup> Barbara Bakker stresses "the need of an Arabic and/or more specifically Egyptian characterization of Arabic/Egyptian dystopian literature" (80).

Having said that, this study examines Abdel Aziz's *The Queue* ("al-Tábūr" 2013; translated into English by Elisabeth Jaquette in 2016) and Rabie's *Otared* ("Uṭārid" 2014; translated into

English by Robin Moger in 2016) with an emphasis on the bilateral trajectory of dystopia. These texts engage with an intrinsically complicated reality, invoking a new literary wave of dystopian fiction against the backdrop of the Arab Spring while being influenced by the translation of Western dystopian literature. The agency of Arabic dystopian novels confronts real, serious events unfolding on the ground, and thus the narrative engages with the status quo critically to address local readers and reflects such existent circumstances dynamically to global audiences. In this regard, translation is a vital key in understanding the dynamics of the genre in influencing Arabic dystopia to engage with ongoing dire conditions and refracting them to the global literary scene. Notably, Abdel Aziz's and Rabie's novels elicit public interest globally after their English translations, as evidenced in the reviews in major English language news outlets, such as *The Guardian*, *Los Angeles Review of Books*, *National Public Radio* (NPR), and *The New York Times*. Their reception in the Anglophone is extraordinary because unlike general books written in English, the translation of Arabic literary texts is seldom reviewed by established book critics and well-known newspapers (Allen, "Translating Arabic Fiction" 166).

Since the genre is in its infancy in Arabic literature, Arabic dystopian novels are heavily influenced by Western dystopian literature. For this reason, this article relies on Western scholarship to contextualize Arabic dystopia. Keith Booker's *The Dystopian Impulse in Modern Literature* is highly pertinent. According to Booker, "The treatment of imaginary societies in the best dystopian fiction is always highly relevant more or less directly to specific 'realworld' societies and issues" (19). Booker's proposition applies to Arabic dystopia as it is concerned with prevailing sociopolitical issues in the present, including political repression, violence, terror, death, and corruption. Thus, Abdel Aziz's *The Queue* and Rabie's *Otared* can be contextualized in such a dystopian framework as they are deeply concerned with confronting ongoing societal issues in the here and now, and thereby protesting dystopian elements in their surroundings. I seek to situate both texts within a new ongoing literary project of dystopia, authored originally in Arabic by novelists who live in the Middle East and North Africa and then translated into English to reach Anglophone readers. This is not to say that dystopia is an entirely new theme in Arabic literature, but rather, these texts exemplify the emergence of a new genre that has been influenced by Western dystopian literature and simultaneously affected by the revolutionary changes and violence in several Arab countries. For the aim of this article, a distinction should be made between theme and genre. The former deals with a motif of a story within the genre itself, while the latter<sup>3</sup> constitutes a specific art form in a specific period with distinct characteristics and contains multiple themes within its narrative. This classification of genre applies to the post-Arab Spring dystopian novels.

The salient generic characteristics and frontloading elements of Arabic dystopian writings are sharing Western thoughts of being protest literature as well as critiquing dictatorships and violence. Namely, Abdel Aziz criticizes the mysterious political power of the Gate and its repressions of the citizens. Rabie's line of attack is on the dark power of both foreign occupation and local dictatorship. Additionally, Abdel Aziz's novel denounces revolutionary violence, which is triggered by the 'Disgraceful Events' when the security forces wiped out the protests that sought to overthrow the authoritarian regime of the Gate. As a result of this brutal response, many people were killed and injured. Similarly, Rabie's text sharply criticizes gory violence while demonstrating that its source derives from colonialism and dictatorship. He highlights a dark relationship between colonialism and authoritarianism, underscoring that they are two sides of the same coin. Moreover, by drawing on dystopia, both authors depict a miserable fate in the protagonists' journey to protest gruesome realities and shatter the reading experience, albeit each novel does so in distinct ways.

In the following sections, I map out the trajectory of dystopia from Western to Arabic literature by drawing on Said's "Traveling Theory." I then elaborate on how the translation of West-



ern literature played a crucial role in influencing the development of Arabic dystopian novels. By relying on Damrosch's "double refraction" metaphor, I aim to underscore the refraction of Arabic dystopia in world literature. Lastly, I show how Abdel Aziz and Rabie consciously use national characters to establish a compass of the original language and convey lived experiences of their society even in Western forms to navigate their characters home and abroad.

### Mapping the Dual Trajectory of Arabic Dystopian Novels: Dynamic Transformation

Like "people," "Ideas and theories travel – from person to person, from situation to situation, from one period to another" (Said, "Traveling Theory" 226). Said's theory suggests a single direction from the place of origin to another, which postulates one-way movement— either from the West to the East or vice versa. He provides an intriguing example of the one-way mobility of ideas between Eastern and Western cultures in the nineteenth century whereby some Eastern ideas about transcendence were transferred to the West, whereas "certain European ideas about society were translated into traditional Eastern societies" (226). By advocating the journey of ideas from one culture to another, Said contends that the practice invites positive innovation and promotes intellectual endeavors—if utilized consciously. Before accruing dynamic momentum, the unilateral mobility of ideas/genres to a new place is subject to acceptance or rejection by a different culture. If it is accepted, it will create a dynamic space, which characterizes the transfer of theory in a novel environment. By investigating an idea's form after it is received in a different environment, he opines the predetermined outcome of mobilizing ideas into a new milieu is metamorphosed. Thus, the journey of ideas indicates that ideas/genres are flexible when adjusting to new settings, creating a dynamic space, a blend of cultural interaction, and intellectual reflection. Although Said's "Traveling Theory" suggests a unidirectional movement, it illuminates a great understanding of the genre's movement from Western to Arabic literature. Expounding on that, the trajectory of dystopia becomes a bilateral track through the role of translation in circulating it between Western and Arabic cultures and impacting both. The genre's movement becomes a round trip, as opposed to a one-way journey. Such a dual trajectory is not merely a matter of departure and arrival; rather, it is a dynamic transformation that carries local conditions denoting signs of resistance. Here, the refractive dynamic of the Arabic processing of Western dystopian forms allows the genre to flow between the two channels but retains differences showing a blend of the two influences in a hybrid mode—thereby occupying a matrix status. Accordingly, Abdel Aziz and Rabie reconstruct their narrative in a Western genre to engage with existing realities unfolding around them to address local audiences while simultaneously aiming to transfer local experiences globally.

Indeed, both writers have localized the genre while reproducing its politics. In *Travels of a Genre*, Mary Layoun argues, "While the novel was not a particularly indigenous literary genre in the 'third' or non-Western world, it quickly predominated as a privileged narrative construct. And yet, on the site of that hegemonic narrative form, there emerged counterhegemonic opposition as well" (xii). Layoun's proposition holds true to the development of Arabic dystopian novels as they share Western thought as protest literature, yet they go beyond that to challenge Western hegemony by transferring local experiences globally. Such a striking characteristic is best exemplified in Rabie's *Otared*. Rabie sets his novel in three timetables unfolding in medieval Cairo (AH 455), revolutionary Cairo (2011), and futuristic Cairo (2025). He mostly focuses his narrative on Cairo in 2025 where half of the city is occupied by the Republic of the Knights of Malta, whereas the other half is controlled by a resistance group of former police officers. Initially, Rabie portrays the struggle for the liberation of the Egyptian people against the occupying army. The novel's protagonist, Otared states, "we shall never, ever give up. We shall persevere until the occupier has been driven out completely. In a few days' time, you shall ignite the revolution that will sweep him away" (Rabie 66). At the same time, the Knights of Malta

continue to launch rocket and artillery attacks against the liberated region of Western Cairo, causing a huge amount of death and destruction. As is described in the following hazy scene:

[the rocket] dropped quickly toward West Cairo and the rocket's body opened to release hundreds of little objects, small bombs that would complete the descent, widening the area of impact and the damage done. They hit a number of buildings and flattened them, even as the bodies of the third and fourth rockets broke open, spilling the cluster bombs that would make sure this patch of West Cairo was utterly destroyed. (111–112)

Rabie delineates the image of dark clouds overshadowing the capital city of Egypt, along with a smell of destruction to highlight the destructive force of occupation in invading the city making it a city of ruins, as it were. In such a barbaric event, violence becomes ordinary, death becomes certainty, and people's lives become trivial. The narrator recounts, "Many were killed and a great number were wounded, most of whom died shortly afterward. Anyone abroad in any of the public squares would have seen one or more bodies lying on the ground, patches of dried blood beneath them" (176). Rabie shows how colonial actions reaped many people's souls like a machine. "And death passed between the people, like a wave taking them, raising up souls and casting bodies down. They were dying in mid-motion, then dropping" (340). In these terrifying scenarios, Rabie limns how the city is wracked by the evil of foreign occupation and dominated by violence. Even when the Knights of Malta withdrew from the country; repression and violence reclaimed the city. The narrator portrays, "In just three months, everything turned upside down: the smiles vanished and violence reclaimed its place in people's lives" (277). Here, Rabie portrays the adverse effects of colonialism, which are subtle, as such effects persist even after the colonizers are vanquished. The narrator describes the period after the foreign occupation as a greater torment: "three months of false hopes and silky words: a short breather in preparation for a greater torment, but without an occupation this time around" (278). His work attacks both foreign power and authoritarian rule along with unleashed violence that caused by these dark forces. In doing so, he artistically invokes the historical experience of Egyptian people under Western occupation; namely, the French in 1798 and then the British in 1882 by referring to the Republic of the Knights of Malta. And he indirectly critiques the rule of Hosni Mubarak in Egypt. By relying on a Western genre, Rabie captures the colonial and postcolonial situation of Egypt, depicting to local and international readers that in both situations the living condition of Egyptian people is macabre. In this way, Rabie's novel reflects a double-edged sword metaphor in remonstrating foreign occupation and local dictatorship.

Abdel Aziz sets *The Queue* in a nameless society, governed by a mysterious regime, known as the Gate. The Gate assumes power after a robust uprising referred to as the "First Storm." The narrator narrates, "Since the Gate had materialized and insinuated itself into everything, people didn't know where its affairs ended and their own began. The Gate had appeared rather suddenly as the First Storm died down, long before the Disgraceful Events occurred" (Abdel Aziz 31). Subsequently, the Gate issues laws and decrees to exert total control over its citizens, requiring them to have permission even for their basic needs. As a result, people stand in line in front of the Gate and the queue grows longer, but the Gate never opens. People are fed up and attempt to overthrow the Gate. The narrator delineates:

The Events had begun when a small group of people held a protest on a street leading to the square. There weren't many of them, but they boldly condemned the Gate's injustice and tyranny. Their demands were lofty, the stuff of dreams ... the protestors called for the dissolution of the Gate and everything it stood for. Before long, others joined the demonstrations, too. They chanted with passion, their numbers grew, and the protest started to move, but they were quickly confronted by the Gate's newly formed security units. These accused the protesters of overstepping their bounds, and said they wouldn't tolerate such insulting behavior. Then the forces attacked ...

The protesters quickly regrouped and met the security forces again, in a street battle that lasted for four days. More and more people fell. The Quell Force had been created to suppress this kind of riot and was better armed than any government agency before it. On the final day, it cleared the square effortlessly, wiping out everyone at the rally in just a few hours. In the end, the Gate and its guardians had prevailed, and they emerged stronger than before. (Abdel Aziz 7–8)

In this revolutionary scenario, Abdel Aziz invokes the Arab Spring metaphorically through the designation of “the Disgraceful Events.” They resonate with the Egyptian uprising, the January 25 Revolution, which took place in Cairo, Tahrir Square in 2011. It is the second wave of the Arab Spring, inspired by the successful revolution in Tunisia. Millions of protesters chant with one voice, the downfall of the Egyptian president, Hosni Mubarak in Tahrir Square. However, the peaceful demonstrations were met by violent confrontations from the Egyptian security forces, causing the death and injury of several hundreds of people. Abdel Aziz’s allegorical rendering of the 2011 events and their aftermath enables her to avoid political censorship while serving an aesthetic function in conveying the uprisings implicitly. By orchestrating revolutionary vocabularies, such as “square,” “the Quell Force” and “newly formed security units,” instead of directly using Tahrir Square and police forces, Abdel Aziz conjures political revolutionary connotations of the Arab Spring allegorically. In other words, by portraying the revolutionary scenario of the Disgraceful Events, Abdel Aziz engages with Arabic Spring, in general, and the Egyptian revolution of 2011 in specific, criticizing Mubarak’s regime and its violent reaction to the protesters who sought to overthrow the regime to achieve freedom, justice, and a better standard of living. Thus, *The Queue* serves as a striking metaphor for political struggle in a revolutionary and postcolonial context.

Generally, Abdel Aziz portrays the struggle of several Arab Spring countries under dictatorship while indirectly blaming the West for many of the problems. Muhsin Al-Musawi argues that the Arabic post-colonial novel “questions authority, in its colonial, postcolonial and native formations. It debates ambivalence, to be sure, and argues for freedom, equality and understanding. It interrogates and questions stratagems of oppression and abuse of power” (19). Al-Musawi’s argument dovetails with Abdel Aziz’s novel as it cries out “bad place” in the time of writing, facing its bitterness while aiming to change the situation into a peaceful and prosperous one. Lindsey Moore opines, “*The Queue* disturbingly mirrors the ‘morbid symptoms’ of an Egyptian postcolony” (208). Needless to say, *The Queue* becomes a metaphor for a community’s struggle under a hegemonic power while signifying citizens striving for justice, freedom, and a flourishing future. The significance of this metaphor is conveyed in the English translation as well. Anglophone readers can follow the community’s struggle and the uprisings against the Gate’s authority, which sought a better way of living, freedom, and justice to protect them versus the oppressive rule of the Gate’s dictatorship, bureaucracy, and repression. In this way, Abdel Aziz provides a powerful political commentary on the status quo of Egypt and other post-Arab Spring countries through a dystopian lens, while refracting such content to the world-literary circuit. Essentially, Abdel Aziz’s novel manifests dual characteristics of dystopia in that it draws on Western models to protest against existing political upheavals, and it conversely bears essential features to criticize Western dominance by convening local experiences globally. In doing so, she conveys internal and external critiques in one go.

### Binary Influence of Translation in Circulating Genres between Arabic and Western Literature

The history of translation has witnessed notable circulation of genres between the Arab and Western worlds, playing an indispensable role in exchanges, influence, domination, and resistance. As such, it does not occur in a vacuum since “There is always a context in which translation takes place, a history from which a text emerges and another one into which a text

is transposed" (Bassnett and Lefevere 11). One prime example is the translation of "Alf Layla Wa-Layla" (*One Thousand and One Nights*) into Western languages. It was first translated into French by Antoine Galland (1646–1715) in the early eighteenth century. Shortly after its reception, it was translated into other major European languages and became very popular. Perhaps this is one of the most influential tales about Orientalism that marks a profound impact on Western culture and still exhibits a continuing influence in contemporary times.

As far as Western influence is concerned, the role of translation is evident in transferring Western genres to Arabic literature as well, such as the emergence of the novel form in the Nahda (the Arab Renaissance) in the nineteenth century. The Nahda is a modern project that has developed in Arabic literature through the revival of classical literature, as pursued by a 'neoclassical' movement and the translation of Western literary works, which is followed by adaptation and imitation.<sup>4</sup> Translating Western fiction during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century plays a key role in developing modern Arabic literature in general and the novel in particular. In addition to the apparent influence of translating Western fiction, Arabic novels have been profoundly impacted by the waves of changes that have colored the modern landscapes of Arabic literature. Allen argues:

as historical events [i.e., colonialism, modernity, revolution] bring about a process of change whereby the Arab world begins to challenge the hegemony of European colonialism and to play a much larger part in the course of its own destiny, so the novel, as reflector and even catalyst of change, assumes a more significant role. ("The Mature of Arabic Novel" 193)

Allen observes that the momentous change occurred not only in Arabic literature but also in the Arab world itself. He stresses the importance of the novel, among other literary genres, insofar as it has the capacity as a leading force to cope with these enormous changes in the Arab regions. Remarkably, the Nobel laureate in literature Naguib Mahfouz (1911–2006) is a critical player in developing Arabic novels. Mahfouz has made a significant contribution and registered his name with golden ink in modern Arabic literature. His achievements culminated in receiving the honorable Nobel Prize in 1988, becoming the first novelist to achieve this prestigious prize in the Arab world. He encourages Arabic writers to adopt the novel as a new mode of artistic writing.

Within the context of literary influence, translation movement in the Nahda "not only introduced Arab writers to the techniques of the different genres of fiction, but also taught them the true value of using characters whose actions might serve to represent life and make it more meaningful" (Moosa 202). In the mid of the twentieth century and afterward, translation introduced many Western works, which in turn, inspired several Arabic novelists. Eisam Asaqli opines that "Translations of Western SF books, short stories etc. were a critical feature in the introduction of the genre into Arabic literature" (1446). Prominent Western works that have been translated into Arabic include Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*,<sup>5</sup> Huxley's *Brave New World*, and Kafka's *The Trial*, *Metamorphose*, etc., making them available to Arab audiences in many bookstores and libraries. There is no doubt that such seminal works have influenced the ongoing development of Arabic dystopian novels, as pointed out by many reviewers. Murphy observes, "Aziz's novel sometimes seems like an obvious cross between 1984 (1949) and *The Castle* (1926)." Specifically, Abdel Aziz's text echoes Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), especially in criticizing totalitarian regimes. Abdel Aziz reveals how the Gate's authority alters the information of the citizens, as in the case of the protagonist, Yehya's medical file. When Dr. Tarek checked Yehya's file, he was astonished when he did not find some information that he wrote himself about Yehya's condition:

He [Dr. Tarek] was searching for the detailed description he had written and signed off himself after seeing the X-ray, but it wasn't there. There were pages missing; he did not know how they had disappeared, but some other hand had clearly been through this version in front of him. All

the useful information had been crossed out and replaced with a superficial report; not even a fresh graduate would write something this worthless, and he hadn't an idea who had altered it. (Abdel Aziz 41)

In this passage, Abdel Aziz resonates with Orwell's text regarding how the Party alters history for the sake of total control by depicting how the Gate's authority mysteriously changes the medical history of Yehya to manipulate his report ensuring that no one is injured in the protest. In this way, Abdel Aziz's account shares some elements of Orwell's writing against the evils of a totalitarian regime, but Abdel Aziz protests ongoing oppression and tyranny, instead of elaborating on the possible conditions under a power-obsessed authoritarian regime. This is an important distinction between Arabic and Western dystopia in that Abdel Aziz's text addresses what actually happened as opposed to imagining what would happen in the future. Abdel Aziz processed and refarmed some dystopian elements to engage with prevailing issues in her environment while reverting them to the global readerships. In turn, Anglophone readers gain some insights about the revolutionary situations against the background of the Arab Spring, but in a dynamic content in which the dystopia elements have been localized to address ongoing sociopolitical conditions. Therefore, for a Western reader, from a culture where dystopia has rather more of a history, read an English translation of an Arabic version of dystopia, containing elements of Arab culture/politics/language that have served to tweak dystopia so as to make it more Arabic while manifesting nuances in a dynamic lens. In this vein, the transformation of dystopia denotes shocking realities, instead of a cautionary tale in the case of Western literature.

In a similar manner, Rabie's *Otared* is inspired by Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" (1915), especially when Gregor Samsa suddenly wakes up one day and finds himself transformed into a giant insect. The physical transformation of Samsa influences Rabie's characters, albeit reflecting a noticeable transformation in Samir and Zahra. Samir is defaced, but when the medical team examines him, nothing is wrong with him. All the test results seem fine:

But the boy had no eyes. No mouth, no ears. His face had been smooth and featureless except for a nose, and a few days later that nose had turned dark brown and dropped off. He had been hooked up to a feeding tube that ran into his stomach, and they had had to cut out a section of the tubing to remove the fallen nose. Despite it all, the boy had managed to live a normal enough life. (Rabie 283)

This passage denotes a dreadful distortion of human anatomy. Sadly, Samir has lost all of his senses; eventually, he dies at the age of ten and many more like him share the same fate—death (284). Indeed, the topography of the grotesque, which represents a deformation, reveals the affected characters, Zahra and Samir, to be out of focus and death is mercy for them. By being robbed of their senses, Zahra and Samir become slowly trapped within themselves, insofar as they are cut off from the real world, culminating in a silent death, then an actual death. On the one hand, Kafka's treatment of Samsa by depriving him of his human form, forces him to accept solitude as his locus of living experience. Consequently, Samsa is denied by society because of his countenance, with the initial exception of his family; but eventually, even his family ignores him, and he dies in his bed. On the other hand, Zahra and Samir are accepted and embraced by society even though they are unaware of the real world. For instance, the four-year-old, Zahra is adopted by Insal and his wife Leila after she is abandoned in the school where Insal works as a teacher. The new family feels compassionate about Zahra and treats her with care and love. This somehow speaks to Samir as well, insofar as he receives medical care until the very last moment of his life. Despite their disfigurement, both Zahra and Samir are treated with care, respect, and acceptance in their society, unlike Samsa, who is rejected by society and lives in solitude until he dies. Kafka underscores an abrupt change, which takes place overnight, wherein the human image is totally lost in Samsa, except for physical sensations in terms of thinking and feeling. In Rabie's *Otared*, by contrast, both Zahra and Samir are affected by a mysterious disease, yet their transformation reveals a gradual change regarding the disintegration of their



sensory organs. Kafka's notion of metamorphosis seems to be a critique of alienation, whereas the disfigurement of Zahra and Samir can be interpreted as a critique of the deformation in the sociopolitical landscapes in Rabie's environment, serving as a fictional site to protest against a transitional stage of reality by reflecting a deformity in the real world. Thus, Rabie echoes the notion of metamorphoses to meet a local condition and transforms it aesthetically by invoking the deformation of realities in local and international contexts.

It is noteworthy that *The Queue* and *Otared*, among other twenty-first-century dystopian novels, have gained attention after their translation into English. Such visibility is attributed to translation-related developments by establishing many pan-Arab literary Prizes as well as the genre's capacity to explore ongoing sociopolitical issues in post-Arab Spring countries—which, in turn, attracts Western interest (Alhashmi 317). This suggests that Arabic dystopian novels celebrate global success not because of the aesthetic merits per se; rather, their manifestations of Western genres in dealing with ongoing conditions. In this situation, translation typically has never divorced from its political context. Lawrence Venuti argues that translation facilitates the circulation of national literature globally while simultaneously being governed by the “values, beliefs, and representations in the receiving situation [Anglophone cultures]” (Venuti 193). Venuti suggests that translation circulates “what is intelligible and interesting to the receptor” (193). Accordingly, translation is affected by Western cultures' values and literary patterns, which in turn, reflects these dynamically in Arabic dystopian novels. Insofar as these texts cope with the rapid changes in the Arab-speaking world, particularly after the Arab Spring, the genre manifests Western ideology concerning some parts of the Arab region, and that is why it triggers Western readers' curiosity. It carries interesting and serious issues for global readers as they are curious about the sociopolitical changes unfolding in post-Arab Spring countries and thus, they gain an alternative insight through novels as such beyond the mainstream news media. At the same time, Abdel Aziz and Rabie write their narrative in Western models with Western readership in mind aiming to transfer their experiences globally. This is something that Allen discusses in “The Happy Traitor” stating that “Certain Arab authors write specifically for translation purposes and with a Western readership in mind” (476). Therefore, the secret recipe for the genre's popularity and its global success is not its poetic per se, rather, it is dynamic in manifesting Western modes of expression while engaging with prevailing states of affairs in post-Arab Spring countries.

### **Navigating National Characters in World Literature: Reading Through Elliptical Refractions**

After their English translations, *The Queue* and *Otared* entered world literature by being read as works of literature and “by circulating out into a broader world beyond its linguistic and culture of origin” (Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* 6). These novels are refracted in their new contexts while bearing the marks of their national origin as pieces of world literature and thus can be viewed “as an elliptical refraction of national literatures” (283). Based on this understanding, translation functions as a channel to transform national literary works beyond borders, whereby English readers find themselves “amid a multitude of partially overlapping ellipses, all sharing one focus in the host culture but with their second foci distributed ever more widely across space and time” (284). In this vein, translation is an indispensable factor in shaping dystopia in Arabic modern literature and then transposing it back to the West in a transformed matrix. Abdel Aziz and Rabie have coded Western forms and decoded the status quo to reveal their intellectual roles by protesting current affairs and foreign interventions. They demonstrate great versatility in encoding some aspects of real-life and depicting national characters in Western forms to convey their dystopian narratives. This is in resonance with Said's exposition:

Characters and societies so represented grow and move in the novel because they mirror a process of engenderment or beginning and growth possible and permissible for the mind to imagine. Novels, therefore, are aesthetic objects that fill gaps in an incomplete world: they satisfy a human urge to add to reality by portraying (fictional) characters in which one can believe. (*Beginnings* 82)

Abdel Aziz and Rabie depict national characters in rendering local circumstances to navigate in Western maps to perform their roles in the global theater. Specifically, both writers have carefully chosen their characters in their respective works; it is as if those writers plucked the characters straight from the street using names, occupations, roles, and interactions. They portray a fictional map of reality using national characters and a native narrative voice to perform locally and globally by drawing on “West European patterns and local reality” (Moretti 64). In doing so, they consciously insert a national frame of reference to transform local experiences into the Anglophone. Namely, reading these characters in translation gives readers signposts of local experiences and different social and cultural backgrounds through their names, customs, social interactions, and daily struggles against the spectacle lens of Arab Spring. Therefore, translation crystalizes the multifaceted matrix of Arabic dystopia to eclipse the genre in the global space. It simultaneously reflects the narrative of national characters of the host culture through an artistic, yet elliptic lens of local scenes.

Abdel Aziz chooses Arabic names for her characters, such as Yehya, Doctor Tarek, Nagy, Ehab, Amani, Um Mabrouk, Ines, etc., along with integrating Egyptian dialects into the dialogues to render everyday circumstances. She introduces an interesting mix of the characters in the queue on equal ground, regardless of their professions, gender, or social class to represent the entire community in a linear structure. The narrator recounts, “There were women and men, young and old people, professionals and the working class. No section of society was missing, even the poorest of the poor were there, not separated from the rich by any means. Everyone was on equal ground” (Abdel Aziz 90). Yehya, the main character, is among the people who are standing in the queue. English readers can follow the protagonist’s journey and his struggle against the political authority of the Gate, who happens upon a protest against “the Gate’s injustice and tyranny” and is shot (7). He has to stand in line and get permission from the Gate. “When he had arrived at Zephyr Hospital on the night of June 18, there had been dozens of people like him, maybe even hundreds. There were some with three or four bullets lodged in their bodies and others with less-serious injuries” (51). However, the Gate released a statement claiming that “no bullets had been fired at the place and time at which he had been injured” (52). Because of the Gate’s unfairness and bureaucracy, Yehya never received authorization for surgery to remove the bullet, and eventually, he lost his last breath while waiting in the queue. “*Yehya Gad el-Rab Saeed spent one hundred and forty nights of his life in the queue*” (215). Yehya’s fate echoes Erika Gottlieb’s proposition: “As in a nightmare, the individual has become a victim, experiencing loss of control over his or her destiny in the face of a monstrous, superhuman force that can no longer be overcome or, in many cases, even comprehended by reason” (11). This embodies Yahya’s destiny as a powerless citizen without any rights in his society, and he eventually becomes a victim of a monstrous government even though he does not break any rules. Such a silent death to the main character utterly impacts the experience of reading. Under the realm of dystopia, Abdel Aziz redeems her hero to underscore the monstrosity of dictatorship and its atrocity against citizens even those who comply with its rule (Alhashmi 4). Abdel Aziz portrays national characters in a dystopian narrative to transport their daily experiences in living under a dictatorial regime to global readerships in their forms to protest revolutionary conditions by invoking the Arab uprisings. In doing so, she refracted local conditions globally. This somehow bespeaks Damrosch’s argument: “When we read in the elliptical space of world literature, we don’t exactly understand the foreign work ‘on its own terms,’ and a leap of the imagination is still needed” (297). Accordingly, world literature occupies a double refraction space

since it is always about both the host culture's values and the works of the source culture (283). Through refracted lenses, the dynamics of Arabic dystopia revere local status quo globally.

By the same token, Rabie chooses various characters from different social classes to represent modern Egypt, including the protagonist, Colonel Ahmed Otared, Insal, a schoolteacher and his wife Leila, and children, Samir, Zahra, etc. In portraying these national characters in his novel, Rabie marks realistic and artistic touches to reflect the post-colonial and post-revolutionary experiences of his society. For instance, Colonel Otared is a former police officer who joins a resistant group to free the half-occupied region of Cairo from the occupiers. He states, "The Egyptian resistance was our paradise: a perfect instance of the Egyptian police service's acumen, its members' devotion to the service of their homeland, and their wary reluctance to outsiders into their circle" (Rabie 34). Initially, as a talented sniper, he is a patriotic citizen who starts his quest by killing high officials of the occupied force: "The resistance carried out assassinations of occupation soldiers, blew up their armored cars and tanks, mortared their bases, and launched missiles at their jets. In the space of a week, more than one hundred Maltese officers and soldiers lay dead" (33). However, he eventually becomes a terrorist by murdering his fellow citizens after the occupation. He stresses, "My primary mission: to deliver people by killing them. I'd done it as a cop, and I'd done it in the resistance, and now I was doing it full of zeal" (306). Through the quest of Otared against foreign occupation and then his radical shift from being a national hero to a terrorist under the authoritarian government, Rabie reflects a dystopian mood in the backdrop of occupation and revolutionary changes to shatter the reading experiences of his audiences at home and abroad. Marcia Lynx Qualey comments on the corruption of Otared and his killing of civilians, observing that his murders are a nefarious echo of the sniper killings in which more than 800 people were killed in Cairo in January and February 2011. Through the transformation of Otared, Rabie denounces both colonialism and dictatorships rendering critical political commentary against the background of political upheavals.

Overall, Abdel Aziz and Rabie consciously use national characters to establish a compass of the original language and convey lived experiences of their society even in Western forms to navigate their characters home and abroad. This resonates with Damrosch's statement: "characters in peripheral societies and minority cultures have regularly found themselves on foreign territory even when they are at home" (90). Remarkably, the national characters of Arabic dystopia play a critical role in performing local experiences on what ultimately becomes a grandiose Western stage. Thus, by reading their novels in translation, Anglophone readers can pronounce the names of the national characters in their terms, and more importantly, fathom their development and interact with their daily experiences to gain more insights. Ergo, reading Arabic dystopian novels in translation can be viewed as "windows into foreign worlds" (Damrosch, *What Is World Literature?* 15).

## Conclusion

The influence of Western dystopian literature on the production of Arabic dystopian novels is evidenced by the travel of genres, the role of translation, and the impact of coloniality.<sup>6</sup> The ongoing dramatic transformations across various parts of the Middle East and North Africa have been profoundly impacted by the revolutionary waves of the Arab Spring and the far-reaching impact of colonialism. In turn, these chains of events have implicated the production of modern Arabic literature. Under these circumstances, writing a new era of independence requires a deep understanding of the course of events that triggered and accentuated transformative changes in the sociopolitical arenas in some regions of the Arab-speaking world. The emergence of Arabic dystopian novels is timely, inasmuch as it reflects these understandings and complications through the influence of Western forms and local narrative voices to engage with multi-layered, complicated realities. It goes without saying that Abdel Aziz and Rabie have adopted

the dystopian narrative, insofar as it offers them a creative, dynamic space to write on crucial societal issues, including criticizing repressive political regimes, denouncing violence, and protesting hegemonic powers. While the political-literary dynamics of dystopia are complicated, translation serves as a mutual channel in facilitating the genre's mobility, thereby influencing its development in Arabic literature while successively transporting it back to the West, albeit with localized contents. In this way, the dynamics of Arabic dystopia have been shaped from within and without due to internal and external factors before it metamorphoses into a matrix model. Hence, the double-edged aspect of Arabic dystopian novels is not merely an index of Western genres but also it engages with ongoing experiences to protest local circumstances and foreign influence. Essentially, the genre explores familiar settings that are already known to the local readers with the purpose of uplifting their societies from the abyss, thereby protecting them from being consumed by the whirlpool of the dystopian and tangible waves. Ultimately, Abdel Aziz and Rabie are calling for freedom, social justice, and a better future.

The future of this newly established genre, in question, is unpredictable since it is still early to anticipate if it will continue to develop or shift its course according to the circumstances. Nevertheless, the significance of recognizing dystopia as a new development in Arabic literature is paramount. For that reason, I hoped to establish a coherent (yet ongoing) body of dystopian novels in contemporary Arabic literature by using Abdel Aziz and Rabie as a core example of this literary movement. Indeed, both writers construct their narratives in the heart of history, participating in real unfolding events on the ground, thereby conveying their efforts via dystopian narratives. To their credit, they succeeded in constituting a new genre locally and transforming it internationally. Overall, Arabic dystopia reflects the disappointment of recent political and historical events by confronting horrific realities instead of anticipating potential dark outcomes in the near future. *However, the story does not end here—it is a call for utopia.*

*University of Tripoli and the University of Gharyan, Libya*

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> It is also known as the Arab uprisings, which refer to the revolutionary waves against authoritarian regimes that hit several countries in the Arab world, started in December 2010 in Tunisia and then, spread elsewhere.
- <sup>2</sup> Expounding on the role of translation in influencing the development of modern Arabic literature, Moosa cites Mahmud Timur's explicit statement: "Arabic fiction has been substantially influenced by translations of Western literature, but notes also that it has deep roots in the Arabs' past" (203).
- <sup>3</sup> "A particular style or category of works of art; esp. a type of literary work characterized by a particular form, style, or purpose" (OED).
- <sup>4</sup> Abdallah Laroui argues that the Nahda is "a vast political and cultural movement that dominate[d] the period of 1850 to 1914. Originating in Syria and flowering in Egypt, the Nahda sought through translation and vulgarization to assimilate the great achievements of modern European civilization, while reviving the classical Arab culture that antedates the centuries of decadence and foreign domination" (vii).
- <sup>5</sup> The novel has been "published six times in the Arab world by six different publishers. Other novels that were translated were those of Arthur C. Clarke, Karel Čapek, Aldous Huxley, etc." (1446).
- <sup>6</sup> It refers to the colonial impacts of external domination over marginalized countries, which continue to prevail.

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# Vampirism and Global Power Relations: A Study of the Fictive Histories in the Swedish Adaptation of *Dracula*

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DIGANTA ROY

**Abstract:** Stoker's *Dracula* frames the entire narrative in the context of the political dynamic between London and East Europe, and the anxieties surrounding the invasion of the London public and domestic spheres by the Romanian Count. At the beginning of the novel, however, Dracula gives a lengthy account of Romania's political rivalry with the Turks, referring specifically to the confrontation between the Voivode and the Turks across the Danube River. This political history in Stoker's *Dracula* is, however, not explored beyond the initial sections of the novel. The Swedish version of *Dracula*, titled *Powers of Darkness*, and published in 1899, explores the political history in a more detailed manner. The Swedish version is not a mere translation of Stoker's novel, as scholars had believed for long, but features additional scenes and characters, which alter the text in significant ways. This paper will argue that the change in the fictive history in this adaptation is a deliberate creative intervention meant to interpolate Stoker's narrative with new political tensions and social drama. This changes the nature of horror itself that defines the 'original' *Dracula*.

**Keywords:** Fictive history, adaptations, *Dracula*, horror

## Introduction

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* has proven to be the definitive text of vampire literature across ages, surpassing texts like Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla*, Polidori's *The Vampyre*, or James Malcolm Rhymer's *Varney the Vampire*. Over the years, vampire literature has proliferated, each treating the theme of blood-drinking according to the anxieties and fears of one's age and geographical location. However, no matter how far the storylines of these vampire narratives may be from Stoker's novel, they are always pitted against *Dracula*, which the other texts are shown to align against, or deviate from. This has led to a debate around what constitutes the 'original' and what constitutes the 'apocryphal' in the oeuvre of vampire fiction. Scholarly studies on these 'adaptations' frequently try to trace the ways in which the 'authentic' *Dracula* is transformed, tampered with, and transferred into a different cultural and historical context, in order to cheat the mechanisms preventing the direct piracy of literary works. In the process, they also radically alter the structure of the fictive history, against which Stoker's novel is set. Such changes to the fictional historical narrative are mostly seen as necessary technical changes to bypass legal issues related to the publication of a 'bootleg' novel. However, I argue in this chapter that the change in the fictive history in such adaptations is a deliberate creative intervention meant to interpolate Stoker's narrative with new political tensions and social drama, that change the nature of horror itself that defines the 'original' *Dracula*. As Brundan, Jones and Mier—Cruz argue, just like Dracula appropriates and transforms the bodies he preys upon, the myriad 'inauthentic' and unauthorized translations and adaptations of *Dracula*, alter Stoker's novel and appropriate it, playing a crucial role in the transmission and reproduction of the text (294). In this paper I will study the 1899 Swedish version of *Dracula*, published by Rickard Berghorn as

*Powers of Darkness*. Instead of trying to verify the actual historicity of Stoker's novel and its adaptations, I will compare the fictive histories of Stoker's novel and the Swedish text in order to prove that any change in Dracula's fictional history leads to a change in the kind of horror generated by the vampire figure in the text.

The change in the fictive history of *Dracula* in the numerous adaptations of the novel, including the Swedish one, depends on the popular reception of the novel through the ages. Critical studies on the novel proliferated during the second half of the twentieth century, with the first modern critical study of the novel being published in 1959 (Riquelme). Furthermore, in 1997, on the centennial of the publication of Stoker's novel, *Dracula* was re-issued in the *Norton Critical Edition*, with Nina Auerbach and David J. Skal as editors (R.L. 133). While the blood-thirsty Count was slowly creeping into the halls of academia, his presence in the popular media was also becoming more and more prominent. Ted Browning's 1931 screen adaptation of *Dracula*, featuring Bela Lugosi as the Count, and Terence Fisher's 1958 screen adaptation titled *Horror of Dracula*, featuring Christopher Lee, established the figure of the vampire in the minds of the people. While scholars have often tried to offer psychoanalytic, historical, or gendered readings of the text, the popular media has highlighted the sensationalized, visceral, and physical aspects of the horror, seeking to excite the audience/readers with a simple tale of horror. However, the Dracula of academia cannot be seen as different from the Dracula in the popular media. Just as in the novel where the Count is simultaneously a warm, polished host and a brutal predator, so also, he lives a double life in the academia and in the popular media.

The critical works on the novel, focusing on the psychological and sociological aspects of horror, deconstruct the way popular imagination perceives the vampire at a particular moment in history. While the audience/readers may not consciously think about the psychological and sociological construction of the text, it nonetheless influences the way it affects them. This in turn determines the way in which the next adaptation will be shaped by the popular imagination, thus paving the way for future popularity of the novel. Studies on Bram Stoker's novel only serve to analyze and critically breakdown the way the popular imagination shapes, and in turn is shaped by, these different adaptations of *Dracula*. The Swedish adaptation, titled *Powers of Darkness*, helps us trace this change in the popular perception of this novel. As we will observe in this paper, while the political anxieties towards the end of the nineteenth century determine the way Stoker's novel is re-imagined by the people, the story of Dracula, and his invasion of England, shapes the popular perception of political rivalries across the world.

### **Dracula and Orientalist Fantasies of Sexual Excess**

Although Stoker locates the castle of the vampire in Transylvania, Count Dracula traces his heritage back to the Szekelys, who were primarily a Hungarian tribe. Dracula repeatedly mentions how his tribe had defended the land against the Turks over the course of history:

...the Szekelys were claimed as kindred by the victorious Magyars, and to us for centuries was trusted the guarding of the frontier of Turkey-land [...] when the flags of the Wallach and the Magyar went down beneath the Crescent, who was it but one of my own race who as Voivode crossed the Danube and beat the Turk on his own ground? (Stoker 34)

Matthew Gibson in his analysis of the Eastern Question in *Dracula* observes that Stoker created the fictional history of the Count by combining the history of the Wallachian Voivode Dracula, found in William Wilkinson's *An Account of the Principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia* (1820), and the political history of the Szekelys, found in Major Johnson's *On the Track of the Crescent* (Gibson 75). Although the Wallachians and the Szekelys belong to different ethnic traditions, Stoker combines the two in the figure of the Count by representing their common enmity against the Turks. As Gibson says, Stoker combines the Turk-hating Dracula of Wilkinson with the Szekelys tribe in

order to establish Dracula as 'a guardian against the Turks...[who] pits the cross against the crescent, even though the former has by now forsaken him' (77). However, the Christian symbols in *Dracula* serve more as elements of horror iconography than as markers of a specific religious worldview. Therefore, Gibson's interpretation of Dracula's tirade against the Turks as a fanatic preference of the cross over the crescent appears too simplistic and faulty. This is because while Dracula proudly talks about how the Szekelys were trusted with the responsibility of defending the borders against the Turks by the Magyars, in the course of the same speech he also talks about how they 'threw off the Hungarian yoke' (Stoker 35) which is a clear reference to the time the Turks defeated the Hungarians in 1526, and Transylvania achieved a status of semi-autonomy (Auerbach and Skal, footnote in *Dracula*, 35). This anomaly in Dracula's political affiliations (which Gibson mentions briefly but ignores as Stoker's misappropriation of his source materials) is significant in two respects.<sup>1</sup> Firstly, it shows that Dracula's vain stories about his past military glory do not imply his allegiance either to the cross or to the crescent but highlight his sense of skilled oratory, which tries to elevate his image from that of a scheming, bloodthirsty monster to that of a brave warrior.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, it situates Dracula at the intersection of Turkish and Hungarian politics, highlighting the influence of both East European and Oriental cultures on the character of the Count. In Stoker's novel, the Oriental influence is only hinted at, and not explored fully. When the Count keeps Harker awake every night, talking about his past, Harker notes that his diary entries, recording the daily conversations he has with Dracula, bear a strong resemblance to the *Arabian Nights* (Stoker 35). Harker's analogy picturizes Dracula as an Oriental despot, who will kill Harker once he is done with him, just like the king plans to execute Scheherazade in *Arabian Nights*, once she has completed her story. Although there has been a reversal of role whereby it is Dracula who is telling the story and not the other way around, it is interesting to note that Harker compares his relationship with Dracula to Shahryâr and Scheherazade of *Arabian Nights*, who ultimately share a nuptial bond. Even before the Count has made an attempt to turn Harker, the latter imagines himself to be a 'bride' of Dracula, thus giving their relationship a deeply sexual character.<sup>3</sup>

While Stoker restricts the Orientalism in *Dracula* to this brief analogy, the Swedish version of *Dracula*, titled *Powers of Darkness* and published in 1899, explores this connection in a more detailed manner. The Swedish version is not a mere translation of Stoker's novel, as scholars had believed for long, but features additional scenes and characters, which alter the text in significant ways. In one such scene added to the novel, the Count, referred to as Draculitz here, offers to show Harker the gallery of family portraits. While going through the portraits, Harker sees the figure of the mysterious woman who appears to him several times in the castle, and towards whom he feels an irresistible sense of attraction (Stoker and A-e 94). The Count, sensing the hidden passion in Harker for the woman in the portrait, goes on to revel in the sensuous details of her physique, which Harker professes, deeply offends his sensibilities (Stoker and A-e 95). The idea of sexuality and vampirism in Stoker's *Dracula* has mostly been seen in terms of Victorian anxieties about the expression of sexual desire outside the boundaries of monogamous, heterosexual marriage. Christopher Craft for example, argues that the novel opens with a sexual threat of Dracula's interest in Harker, which may lead to the Count penetrating and draining him (109-110). Similarly, Phyllis A. Roth observes that Lucy is allowed to be voluptuous only after she is turned into a vampire, and that the human relationships in the novel are spiritualized to the extent that their sexual natures are made invisible (115). However, *Powers of Darkness* situates the sexual perversion of Draculitz within the larger Orientalist discourse of the nineteenth century, rather than just placing it in the context of the Victorian repression of sexuality. When Draculitz speaks about the portrait of the woman in overtly sexual terms, Harker says that he is reminded of a painting he once saw in an exhibition, and goes on to give a detailed description of the scene in the painting:

...a slave trader who displayed his product to a lustfully reclining Turkish pasha (or something along those lines) — a beautiful naked woman whose charms he expatiated upon and pointed out with the

full eloquence of the connoisseur and the businessman, hoping to make her even more desirable to the intended buyer... (Stoker and A-e 95-96)

The Oriental landscape has frequently been seen as a place of sexual excess in the Western imagination. As Nigel Leask observes, that the East in orientalist literature was increasingly seen as a place of licentiousness and perversion by the West in order to justify its moral and economic appropriation by the colonial forces of Europe (21). Harker assumes a moral high ground above Draculitz because he feels that the Count's excessively erotic descriptions of the woman in the portrait form a part of his Eastern identity. Even before Stoker, the association of Oriental sexual excess with vampirism is found in Byron's *The Giaour*, where the intense sexual rivalry between Hassan and Giaour over Leila leads to Hassan killing his beloved, and Giaour avenging her death by killing Hassan (123-155). The narrator says that because of Giaour's act of murder he will haunt his family and suck their blood as a vampire to sustain his undead body. Similarly, in William Beckford's *Vathek*, the eponymous Oriental ruler indulges in licentious sexual activities, and in excessive worldly pleasures in his five Palaces of Senses, eventually leading to his damnation (Beckford).

Harker's recollection of the painting with the lustful Turk, in response to Draculitz's sensual picturization of the portrait, thus falls in the tradition of Western writers labelling the Orient as a land of sexual perversion and ribaldry. However, it is not Draculitz whom he compares to the lustful Turk in the painting. If we study the analogy closely, Harker is comparing Draculitz to the slave trader who is displaying the naked woman, which makes him the lustful Turk, whom the Count is trying to titillate with his erotic picturization. In a way therefore, Harker willfully participates in this orientalist sexual fantasy, imagining himself to be the Turkish lord who is enjoying the way the slave trader presents the woman. As Said observes, that for the European writer the Orient was a place where one could experience sexuality in a more libertine and guilt-free manner which was not possible in the West (190). If Draculitz's purpose is to make the mysterious woman irresistible for Harker, like the slave trader's 'display' makes her more desirable to the Turkish lord, the Count is indeed successful. Harker himself confesses at one point that he has had several opportunities to escape from the castle through other hidden routes but the sensual memory of the mysterious woman, and the desire to see her again, has prevented him from doing so (Stoker and A-e 186). Unlike Stoker's Harker who is trapped by Dracula without any chance of escape, the Harker of *Powers of Darkness* is trapped by his own desire. Although he realizes the incipient dangers of staying in the castle, he says, 'I do not wish to talk about, nor think about going home — the thought itself is a horror' (Stoker and A-e 188). The white, Western man has thus immersed himself in the oriental fantasy that Draculitz has created, to the point that he is unable to escape from it. Moreover, the thought of going home makes Harker afraid because the pleasures of sensual imagination, to which he has subjected himself in Draculitz's castle, would haunt him with guilt once he enters the 'civilized' Western world. This is because, although Harker maintains his fidelity to Wilma (the Mina figure in the Swedish version) by not giving in completely to the seductions of the woman at the castle, he repeatedly calls out to her mentally, and enjoys thinking about her sexualized form. Just like the white, English writers of nineteenth century vicariously enjoying the pleasures of unbridled sexuality through their orientalist writing, Harker too participates in the fantasy of the mysterious woman to indirectly break free from his sexual rigidity in this alternative space. The horror in *Powers of Darkness*, unlike Stoker's novel, is not just the horror of the white, Western man on encountering the Other in an unfamiliar, culturally-distant setting. It is the horror of returning from the non-Western, orientalized space, and re-acclimatizing oneself to the society of England, after one has willingly participated in the sexualized fantasies of the East.

While Harker had referred to Draculitz as a 'Hungarian, or rather Transylvanian, magnate' (Stoker and A-e 56) on receiving his letter at Bistritz, following the scene at the gallery he calls him an 'immoral, barbaric, unreliable, and despotic Oriental — or rather half-Asian' (Stoker and A-e 96). Soon after, when Draculitz continues to talk about women in explicitly carnal terms, Harker com-



ments on his 'strange Asian eyes' and is disgusted with his 'Eastern eroticism' (Stoker and A-e 96). The change in Harker's portrayal of the Count's heritage from an East European one to an out-and-out Eastern one is a significant departure from Stoker's novel. Stoker's *Dracula* inhabits a world that despite being located at the far Eastern ends of Europe is nonetheless a part of it. The members of the Crew of Light therefore actually go to Transylvania and kill the Count, along with the female vampires, thereby returning 'normalcy' to the region, and re-instating it as a part (although a culturally distant one) of the rational West. In *Powers of Darkness* on the other hand, Draculitz's world is orientalized to the point that it is imagined as an alternative, fantastic space to which neither Harker returns, nor the members of the Crew of Light go, to end the terrors present in the castle. Draculitz is killed off in London itself; whatever horrors remained in the castle at Transylvania, including the woman who had repeatedly appeared to Harker, and the mysterious creatures participating in some weird blood cult, are left undisturbed in that alternative space.

The orientalizing of Draculitz thus leads to the creation of this zone of horror, which, despite the efforts of Helsing and the others, is not integrated within the European space. However, this alternative zone of horror does not remain restricted to Transylvania but is also found in the orientalized space of Carfax, where Dr Seward meets the Countess. While in Stoker's novel, the house at Carfax was used solely by Dracula as his lair, in *Powers of Darkness* it becomes the meeting place for strange cultists, which forms the second layer of horror in the text. When Dr Seward is invited to the house at Carfax to treat the Countess, he is directly led into her private room. Although the house is in London, Seward notes how the wallpaper depicts 'an Oriental landscape' and how the finely carved latticework with thin columns was 'probably a fantasy of some returned nabob, who... had wished to conjure a colourful, Oriental world in the vicinity of fog-shrouded London' (Stoker and A-e 418). The Oriental world which Harker had conjured up in his imagination in Transylvania has thus assumed a physical reality of its own, and permeated the house at Carfax in London. Within this world, Dr Seward participates in a kind of orientalist harem fantasy where he sees the Countess in her private domestic space, rising up from a divan to meet him.<sup>4</sup> The harem, as a cloistered space in the household reserved for the women and inaccessible to people from outside, formed an important part of the Western sexual imagination of the East, in the paintings and the writings of the nineteenth century. The women in such narratives — whether visual or textual — would often be shown as nude or semi-nude in 'a state of pleasing vulnerability' while the European onlooker is fully dressed and equipped with his rationality and language to describe this encounter (Kabbani 73). This orientalist harem fantasy becomes all the more explicit the second time Dr Seward visits the house at Carfax. This is because, this time Dr Seward is directly taken to the bedroom of the Countess, where she is lying down with a dressing gown wrapped around her (Stoker and A-e 426). As Seward opens the dressing gown to check her with the stethoscope, he notices that 'she was entirely undressed under the same, so that her naked, perfectly beautiful figure' was outlined against the lining of the robe (Stoker and A-e 426). This undressing of the Countess in her bedroom by Dr Seward marks the fulfillment of his sexual fantasy, which I argue had been triggered by the orientalist motifs on the wall, the first time he had entered Carfax. While the Countess lies there in her state of vulnerability — both in the sexual sense of being undressed, and in the physical sense because of her illness — Dr Seward arrives as a symbol of Western rationality with his knowledge of medicine and cure. However, the rationality of the white, Western man is soon subverted as he is called upon to cure her, not by using his knowledge of medicine but through the process of hypnosis. Just like Harker, this orientalized world that his own fantasies have played upon, consumes him completely to the point that he returns time and again to the house at Carfax, furthering his own destruction.

### *Powers of Darkness and Continental Politics in the Nineteenth Century*

The Swedish version therefore, adds extensive Oriental details to Stoker's original text and significantly alters the nature of the text. Although such details may appear to be a mere reflection of

nineteenth century European attitudes towards the East, they bring about significant changes in the original political dynamic of Stoker's novel. Stoker's *Dracula* brings out the horrors of an East European Count who 'invades' England and spreads his empire by turning people into vampires. This East European monster is tracked down and killed, securing the borders of Britain against foreign elements once again. *Powers of Darkness* however, complicates the political framework of the text by highlighting Draculitz's position in the global politics of the time. When Harker browses through the letters of the Count he finds that there are names which 'are known throughout Europe, indicating secret connections and combinations ... [that are] significant, politically as well as socially and culturally' (Stoker and A-e 164). When Barrington Jones, the detective, starts investigating Draculitz's political activities he finds that he is suspected of several political conspiracies and associated with several anarchist groups in the Continent (Stoker and A-e 265). Moreover, he also uncovers a conspiracy against England in the letters of the Count, which was meant to weaken its power and influence from within. The reference to the political upheavals in the Continent, along with the Oriental details in *Powers of Darkness*, highlights Britain's complex international relations with France, Sweden, and the Ottoman Empire during the nineteenth century. From the end of the eighteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the political ambitions of Napoleon Bonaparte led to a series of global conflicts over the issue of territorial control, referred to as the Napoleonic wars. Although the parties involved in the Napoleonic wars changed with each Coalition that was formed, Britain's rivalry with France over the process of empire building led to the continuation of war between them for 20 years, with Britain spending over £65 million on subsidising wars against Napoleon (Mikaberidze xiii-xiv). Meanwhile, because of King Gustavus IV Adolf's dislike for the French Revolution, Sweden joined the Third Coalition in 1805 along with Britain and Russia, leading to the Franco-Swedish War (Mikaberidze 334). In *Powers of Darkness*, the house at Carfax becomes the meeting point for a group of cultists who are also tied with some form of political conspiracy. These meetings of conspirators are presided over by the Countess, whose appearance and language is revealed to be French. Given the common enmity between Britain and Sweden against France during the Napoleonic wars, it is no surprise that the leader of a group of political conspirators is given a French character in a Swedish adaptation of an English text. Although the novel is written and set during the end of the 19th century, the Napoleonic wars highlight the long-standing history of rivalry between Britain and France in the 19th century. That is why although there is no direct reference to the Napoleonic wars in *Powers of Darkness*, the historical background of this rivalry between the two countries helps us understand why the conspirators are shown to be French.

*Powers of Darkness* therefore significantly alters the London-Romania political dynamic of Stoker's *Dracula* by introducing this additional subplot that ties England to the global politics of the time. Unlike Dracula's invasion of London and his spread of vampirism, which is contained within England once he arrives at Whitby, Draculitz's invasion of England affects its position within the Continental politics on the whole. As Barrington Jones says, '...this is about a grand conspiracy of a political nature...England's power and influence have long been a thorn in the side of the nations of the Continent...our enemies...have had the sense to enlist allies...' (Stoker and A-e 510). The invasion of the vampire in Stoker's *Dracula* is a localised threat from Romania, which temporarily acts as a source of anxiety about the intrusion of the East European Other. In *Powers of Darkness*, on the other hand, Draculitz's coming to England is tied to the systematic destabilisation of Britain's political influence. The threat in the latter case, is not just a supernatural threat from East Europe which can be isolated and eliminated but a diplomatic and political threat posed by the countries across the Continent, which Draculitz is manipulating to his advantage. The fear of Britain's political downfall thus accompanies the fear of spiritual degeneration that Stoker's *Dracula* was based on. That is why Draculitz is defeated by the combined efforts of Van Helsing, who uses his knowledge about the occult to stop the spiritual and moral decay brought about by the vampire, and Barrington

Jones who uses his intelligence about secretive international conspiracies to reduce the political damage inflicted by the Count's criminal activities. Moreover, unlike Stoker's novel, *Powers of Darkness* does not receive a closure with the death of Draculitz alone. Many of the Count's accomplices who served as diplomatic corps in England are called back by their governments, while some disappear or commit suicide (Stoker and A-e 539). Despite the end of the supernatural villain, there is a hint that England's political troubles are far from over, given the complicated nature of its diplomatic relations with other countries. The successful translation of horror from a British text to a Swedish one is thus based on shared political aspirations and anxieties of the two countries in the Continental play of power. The supernatural horror in Stoker's *Dracula* only acts as a metaphor for the fin-de-siècle Victorian fears about sexuality, degeneration, and social change. In *Powers of Darkness* however, the political horror is not just metaphorical but an actual part of the plot that cannot be resolved using the conventional remedies for supernatural monsters. This actuality of the political horror — which is fused with the supernatural horror of the novel — extends it beyond the boundaries of the text, and beyond the death of the vampiric Count.

The presence of the Countess within London, from where these conspirators bring their plans to destroy England to fruition, is thus a political commentary on the rivalry between France and Britain over territorial expansion during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. However, the Continental politics in the Swedish version is not restricted to Franco-Britain or Franco-Swedish conflict alone. When Dr Seward goes to attend the concert of Signor Leonardi — a famous musician who is a part of the cultist group at Carfax — he overhears a conversation about a secret plan to destroy Britain, involving huge sums of money:

Why, Russia has not yet said its last word...the mines are already worth billions and there is infinitely much more gold than they yet suspect...once the armaments are completed, I promise that the mood *here* will be such that it only takes one spark to light the fuse — and then — *finis Britannia!* (Stoker and A-e 467)

The reference to the gold mines, that they will probably use to generate wealth for making arms, seems to be a reference to the gold rush which took place in Siberia during the nineteenth century. The gold rush was a result of the discovery of a mine in Siberia in 1838 on the Ulderey River, and resulted in Russia acting as the main source of gold, accounting for as much as sixty percent of world production in the first half of the nineteenth century (Marsden and House 3). In the novel, it is probably the wealth that is being generated through these mines that is being used to fund the political destruction of Britain. Although Draculitz is not directly shown participating in these schemes of disrupting Britain's social stability, his presence at the meetings at Carfax, and the letters Harker discovers at his castle, hints at his involvement in this larger political scheme. For a large section of the novel, Draculitz is absent from the main scene of action, with the plot revolving around Dr Seward's gradual discovery of the dangerous nature of the conspiracies being hatched in the house opposite to his asylum. But it is important to remember that it is Draculitz who had purchased the house at Carfax, and who is now controlling this flow of wealth to manipulate the Continental rivalries to his advantage.

In Stoker's novel, Carfax was more of a lair for the undead where Dracula's coffins were stored. In the Swedish version however, the political activity at the house of Carfax supersedes the vampiric activity of Draculitz in England. Rather than acting as the undead who rises up from his grave to prey on the living, Draculitz's vampirism is seen more as a medium for establishing his position within the global politics as a powerful contender for power. Stoker's Dracula sees his past glory as a Szekelys warrior as part of a different world that is gone. After his initial conversations with Harker about his war with the Turks we never find a reference to his political identity when he comes to London to prey on the living as a vampire. Draculitz, by contrast, renews his political ambitions of ruling the world as a conqueror by carefully using international alliances and rivalries to strengthen his hold of power. In doing so, he places Eastern Europe at the center of world politics rather than

seeing it as a peripheral power living in the shadow of the West. The reference to the gold being used for making armaments also alters the nature of vampirism in the text. Stoker's *Dracula*, as critics have identified, is seen as an aristocratic hoarder of wealth, and is a symbol of old money belonging to a corrupt class (Halberstam 346–348). Citing the scene where Harker finds a heap of gold covered in dust at Dracula's castle, vampirism is seen as a hindrance to the natural flow of currency (Halberstam 346). Similarly, Franco Moretti observes that Dracula 'lacks the aristocrat's conspicuous consumption' as he keeps no servants, drives his own carriage, and prepares the bed and meals for Harker on his own (90). Although this wealth is later used by Dracula to infiltrate London and satisfy his bloodlust, on the whole, the Count has managed to keep his money out of circulation.

In *Powers of Darkness* however, not only does Draculitz have a deaf-mute woman at the castle to work for him, once in London, he is also seen in these lavish parties hosted at Carfax. Within this changed Gothic economy, the vampire has not only learned to circulate the wealth he has amassed but also to use it in his transactions of power across the world. He no longer acts as the monopolistic villain who hoards both blood and gold for himself, acting as the sole source of horror in the text. Rather, Draculitz operates in conjunction with a host of other characters, who despite their participation in cultist activities, may not be blood-sucking vampires themselves. Unlike Stoker's *Dracula*, the act of turning others into vampires is not the sole purpose with which the Count arrives in England. Through his wealth and influence, Draculitz creates a global alliance, working towards spreading his power on a wider scale.

The involvement of Russia in this plot against England becomes significant in the light of what Dr Seward reads in the telegram section of the newspaper. While commenting on the general state of war and lawlessness across the world, Seward notes that 'the free republicans in France are lauding with exultation the representative of slavery and despotism in the East — their highly honoured and beloved new ally, "Holy" Russia' (Stoker and A-e 469)! Britain's relationship with Russia had already been fraught with tensions because of the Crimean War fought between 1853–1856, over issues of territorial control in areas that were then under the Ottoman Empire. Although both Britain and France had supported the Ottoman empire in the conflict with Russia during the Crimean War, the alliance of Germany and Austria in 1879 severely disturbed the balance of power in Europe, which led to the creation of the Franco-Russian alliance in 1894 (Bovykin and Spring 21). Dr Seward's mention of France's newest ally is marked by a tone of condemnation towards Russia, which further highlights Russia as a force of evil that is working towards the destruction of Britain.<sup>5</sup> The horror in the Swedish version of *Dracula* therefore stems from a sense of political volatility that was gradually spreading across continents before the eventual eruption of the First World War. Within this scene of instability and mistrust among the global powers, the fear of national safety somehow overlaps with the personal fear of being turned into a vampire and being corrupted by Draculitz. But there is also a subtle hint that while Draculitz is using this atmosphere of political volatility to further his own nefarious purposes, he is not necessarily the cause of it. The intense struggle for territorial control, and the imperial rivalries among the different countries, were gradually pushing the world towards a point of total breakdown during the end of the nineteenth century. Draculitz's power-hungry vision of ruling the entire world mirrors the political ambitions of most of the global, imperial powers like Britain, Russia, France and others, all of whom were locked in a struggle for control. The horror in *Powers of Darkness* is thus less tangible because it is not concentrated in the monster alone but is diffused across the countries. Rickard Berghorn, in his introduction to the novel, commenting on Dr Seward's reference to the antisemitic persecution of the Jews, observes that the novel anticipates the rise of Nazism in a way. He compares Draculitz's ideas of building a world ruled by 'the Strong' to Hitler's fascist ideas about the superiority of his own race (Berghorn 12). While such references either to the rising anti-Jewish sentiment or to Franco-Russian politics are not explored beyond their initial mention, they point towards a global hunger for power that seriously impacts the course of history. Count Draculitz's vampirism, while a formidable threat to deal with, becomes secondary to this broken state of world order which cannot be restored easily.

*Powers of Darkness* thus has to be read in retrospect, in the light of the events of the First and the Second World Wars that would eventually rack the world after the novel was published. And it is this retrospective, historical reading which leads to a successful translation of the horror from Stoker's *Dracula*. *Powers of Darkness* thus continuously looks forward in horrific anticipation, rather than peeking at the monster behind the back. It looks at the vampire as a threat to modern, mercantile, and military England. While translating the elements of horror in *Powers of Darkness*, the same scene, character, or motif, begins to carry different historical and political meanings, changing the way the readers perceive the monster. In this Swedish version of *Dracula*, horror is not just the end result of the narrative, rather it is a medium through which the complex global relations between empires and nations are understood. Therefore, these translations are more than inauthentic, bootleg versions of Stoker's novel that they were earlier believed to be. Through the act of translation, they have acquired meanings that expand and enhance the global relevance of the myth of Dracula.

Falakata College, Falakata, West Bengal

### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In the Norton edition of *Dracula*, the editor mentions in a footnote that the patriotic rhetoric of Dracula 'makes more sound than sense.' This hollow oratory of Dracula and his obsession with his political past seems to be more than a nostalgia for his military exploits. Since Stoker deliberately refrains from revealing the origins of Dracula as a vampire, it is possible that the Count's reminiscence of history is based on a longing for his past human self, before he was turned into an undead.
- <sup>2</sup> Dracula's eloquent speeches also link him to another important literary portrayal of evil, namely, Milton's Satan. Declan Kiberd in his book *Irish Classics* goes so far as to say that 'In another kind of story, Dracula would indeed have been the hero (at least in the way that Satan was in *Paradise Lost*)'. Although as readers we may not see him as a hero, Dracula views himself not as a bloodsucking monster but as a descendent of a powerful race meant to conquer the world.
- <sup>3</sup> The queerness of *Dracula* has been analyzed by Prof. Prodosh Bhattacharya and Dr. Abhirup Mascharak in their essay "'Wilde Desire' Across Cultures: *Dracula* and its Bengali Adaptations." However, Harker's portrayal of his relationship to Dracula in such nuptial terms brings into focus the question of Harker's queerness as well.
- <sup>4</sup> Although Dr Seward initially indicates that the appearance of the Countess is that of a 'Paris chic', he later refers to her as a 'more or less dubious Polish, Wallachian, or Roumanian Countess.' The orientalizing of the private space of the Countess reminds us of Harker's orientalizing of the gallery scene with Draculitz, as both the scenes associate the Orient with some kind of sexual excess.
- <sup>5</sup> It is important to note that Britain too joined the Franco-Russian alliance later, forming the Triple Entente in 1907. However, at the time when *Powers of Darkness* was published in 1899, Britain was diplomatically aloof from the affairs of the Continent, forming no permanent allies. This period, often referred to as Britain's 'splendid isolation,' finds a reflection in the novel wherein Britain receives no help from the Continent regarding the conspiracies being plotted against it, and must fight off Draculitz's transcontinental attack alone.

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## Book Reviews

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LITERATURE, EDUCATION, AND SOCIETY: BRIDGING THE GAP. By Charles F. Altieri. UK: Routledge, 2023. 92 pp.

Education in liberal arts is increasingly being marginalized in universities. A number of factors including but not restricted to lack of funding, reluctance to appoint faculty coupled with a general resistance on the part of students to opt for courses that do not guarantee job opportunities have caused this situation. Charles F. Altieri in *Literature, Education, and Society* examines this issue and makes a powerful case for supporting and sustaining education in liberal arts. The work adopts a fresh strategy by focusing not on knowledge but on how literature and the arts provide distinctive domains of experience that stress significant values not typically provided by other disciplines.

Focusing on unquantifiable benefits to make a case for literature in itself is challenging. Altieri addresses the vexed question of ethics, arguing that while one cannot categorically affirm that a focus on arts improve behavior, its stress on art's purposive structuring of experience can affect how people construct values, something essential to education itself.

The volume is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter "The Gift That Keeps Giving: Why Education in the Arts Matters" the author examines the benefits of studying literature. "Imaginative texts exist for me in the domain of affectively articulated possibility rather than in the domain where explanation reigns" says Altieri highlighting the need for a differentiated approach while comparing education in liberal arts with education in other branches of knowledge like mathematics or science. Interestingly, Altieri's proposition on how literature engages our awareness of distinctive "experiences as" by acts of "doubling," resonates with the Indian aesthetic concept of *Sahridaya* (co-experiencing, the poet creates – the reader recreates).

The second chapter "Appreciating Literary Fictions" deals with the aesthetic experience of reading fiction. The resonance with the characters that the reader experiences is the focus of this chapter. "Significant works of fiction, like those that make it into teaching canons" encourages the reader "not primarily to judge the lives of the main characters but to establish sympathy for and understanding of their various ways of engaging the world through time."

In the third and final chapter "Plato's Allegory of the Cave Revisited: The Ecstatic 'Is' as Bridge between Aesthetics and Ethics" he concludes his argument. Altieri feels that "the need for revising Plato's vision of *padeia* remains pressing because the force of the shadows pervading our social relations, our relations to the natural world, and our relations to ourselves is ... no less imposing on our culture than on Plato's." Considering Plato's allegory and Heidegger's reading of the same Altieri shows how both thinkers envisage education as a force that brings actual states of the world and of the self out of the shadows into a condition of "unhiddenness." Altieri freely admits that "Aesthetic values need not be ethical values" but nevertheless plays a vital role in honing ethical sensibilities.

"Does literary education really help us appreciate how other minds and sensibilities work? Can it develop values that involve respect and care and strong experiences of social bonding beyond one's immediate interests? And if it can, shouldn't university education take these values as worth making special efforts to support?" These are some of the questions that Charles F. Altieri raises in the volume *Literature, Education, and Society: Bridging the Gap*. This slim volume is rich in innovating thoughts and can prove stimulating to a teacher of literature and arts in general. Moreover, the author uses

examples from fiction and poetry to comprehensively illustrate his points. The book is published by Routledge and is one of the volumes belonging to the series Routledge Focus on Literature.

SANGEETHA PUTHIYEDATH  
EFL University, Hyderabad

LIVING IN WORDS: LITERATURE, AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL LANGUAGE, AND THE COMPOSITION OF SELFHOOD. By Garry L. Hagberg. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. 304 pp.

Garry L. Hagberg's recent monograph *Living in Words: Literature, Autobiographical Language, and the Composition of Selfhood* (Oxford, 2023), continues to follow the intellectual itinerary developed in his last work *Literature and its Language: Philosophical Aspects* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2022) by narrowing the scope of his inquiry to more specific concerns regarding the relationship between literary depictions of subjectivity and topics in the philosophy of language. Whereas Hagberg's contributions to the 2022 volume focused upon the capacity of events in the life of an individual to anchor, and similarly alter, the semantic value attached to the terms of one's personal lexicon, *Living in Words* extends this project by reflecting on the structure of subjectivity as seen through the lens of narrative.

This robust account prominently comes to the fore in Hagberg's discussion of Aristotle's *Poetics*, emphasizing the reciprocal dependence among single episodes within a narrative both requisite and, in some sense, essential to the coherence of a given plot. Prior to addressing potential lacunae, Hagberg puts forth a faithfully Aristotelian understanding of narrative as referring not a "purely episodic plot structure that merely strings events together along a temporal continuum" but rather a causal thread responsible for stitching an array of disparate occurrences into a single, unified whole (106). This moment underscores a broader theme that itself serves to unify Hagberg's text: the difference between succession and simultaneity is the difference between what sediments the past and what constitutes a history. The accomplishment of this reading of Aristotle is to extract from the *Poetics* a recipe for the former's differentiation between "composition," "construction," and "constitution" (xxx). Whereas "constitution" connotes the lack, or even impossibility, of a subject's access to agency with respect to the genesis of his or her subjectivity, Hagberg's avoidance of "construction" as a term of artifice is part of a methodological attempt to suggest that, forceful as external factors may be, the shape they impart to us is regulative, not constitutive. By contrast, "composition" puts forth a musical analogy "suggestive of an active and creative undertaking, but within limits that are themselves interesting" (xxx).

Hagberg finds in the *Poetics*' famous account of tragedy a means of bulwarking the idea that composition provides the fundamental structure of plot narrative and personal identity. In one of his text's most engaging moments, Hagberg does so by raising the question of whether Aristotle is right to situate plot structure as what pre-eminently authorizes us to compare and contrast tragedies in terms of one another. If what accounts for the way in which plot structure hangs together is the author's illustration of ostensibly independent events through causal linkages that inexorably dovetail, then the structure of a drama provides a useful analogue for the structure of a life. But, Hagberg asks, does this imply that the structure of a plot also provides a measure of its veracity? "Or is it merely a measure of the literary value of that life-narrative wholly separate from any question of its truth?" (107). *Living in Words* develops a multifaceted answer far too nuanced to definitively situate itself at the site of either pole. The value here is the import that his unraveling of this question has for the aforementioned notion of "composition." Just as Aristotle tasks the author with an imperative to thread together the events of the work, the concept of "composition" likewise involves unearthing

the various means through which two disparate nodes may be connected to one another. The difference, however, is that for Hagberg, composition refers to an indefinite process of combination, permutation and, ultimately, complexification: “Stravinsky said that a blank sheet of music manuscript paper was paralyzing, but once he had an interval, a single pair of notes in place that carried a range of implications and possibilities within themselves, he could fly” (xxx).

MICHAEL BARR

*Stony Brook University, New York, USA*

READING BAUDELAIRE WITH ADORNO: DISSONANCE, SUBJECTIVITY, TRANSCENDENCE. By Joseph Acquisto. New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. 193 pp.

Virtually no aspect of Theodor Adorno’s prodigious body of theoretical writing is more contested today than his late turn to aesthetics. He had written on aesthetic themes since his earliest days, and was initially invited to contribute to the journal of the Institute for Social Research as its in-house musicologist, but it would be in the unwieldy, incomplete *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), jigsawed together from his drafts and published posthumously, that he undertook the most thoroughgoing effort to salvage from aesthetic experience an evasive kernel of truth about the damage done to subjectivity in the modern world. Much of this writing had its roots in embattled debates with Walter Benjamin in the 1930s on the potential of art both to reflect and critique the troubled consciousness of unfettered capitalism’s subjects, and the degree to which an overtly politicised art and the ironised, alienated experience of humankind could be made productively interdependent.

For both Adorno and Benjamin, the poetry and prose of Charles Baudelaire in the mid-nineteenth century represented a touchstone for the perceptual convulsions experienced by the city-dweller of the industrial era. In poems that break with the Romantic tradition of entranced contemplation, substituting for it a febrile sense of dissonance, Baudelaire brings to birth a modern aesthetic sensibility that refuses the cultic mythmaking of earlier eras. Now, in a new work that intricately aligns the French poet’s writings with the aesthetics of Adorno, Joseph Acquisto, a professor of French literature at Vermont, pursues these continuities with an imaginative vigour and assiduity rarely seen in this field.

Acquisto makes it clear from the outset that his study will not merely situate Baudelaire in his own epoch in a sterile historicist exercise, but will construct a transhistorical constellation by which the poetics of one of his subjects and the philosophy of the other will mutually illuminate each other. There are risks to such an approach, to be sure, not least in that it means negotiating the potential traps that facile anachronism might set, but Acquisto is far nimbler than that. Citing Adorno’s declaration in the *Aesthetic Theory* that artworks are ‘enigmatic in that they are the physiognomy of an objective spirit that is never transparent to itself in the moment in which it appears’, the author emphasises the importance of returning again and again to the artwork, ever anew, to scrutinise its instability rather than resting with a final definitive interpretation. This is one of the ways in which Adorno’s aesthetics anticipated the post-structuralist insistence on the endless mutability of the text, but without sacrificing its ethical imperative to convict a faulty world of its untruth.

Acquisto takes three major themes in relation to Baudelaire and Adorno: the expression of dissonance as the prefiguration of modernist technique; the transformation of subjectivity, encompassing the renewal of the subject-object relationship between the poet and his world; and the remodelling of the traditional poetic habit of transcendence, by which the lyric subject incorporates the external world into his or her own aesthetic sensibility.

At one level, there is an evident philosophical homology between the antitheses of dissonance and harmony and those of truth and falsity. In the French, the term for a discord embraces the very notion of falsehood, as when Baudelaire writes 'Ne suis-je pas un faux accord / Dans la divine symphonie' ['Am I not a discord / In the heavenly symphony', 'L'Héautontimorouménos']. In the *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno famously states that '[d]issonance is the truth about harmony', by which he intends to charge the artwork that attempts to saturate its view of the world with concordant positivity with being flagrantly deceptive. The dissonant tendencies often to be observed in the later works of such masters as Michelangelo, Rembrandt and Beethoven are less subjective expressions of the fatalism of their individual creators as they are ramifications of the suspect nature of the ideal of harmony as such, its inadequacy. Harmony can only possess truth when it stands revealed as unattainable, and for the spiritual resonances that realisation of its unattainability sets up. In a dictum of *Minima Moralia* (1951), Adorno had stated that the aim of art in the contemporary world should not be to bring order into chaos, but precisely the reverse, that the deadening order of a wholly administered social reality should be subverted with the chaos of dissonance.

These relations are, as always, dialectical. Dissonance achieves its fullest effects and its greatest truth in the context of the harmony that it comes to undermine. Once modern music, for example, was effectively liberated from tonal harmony altogether, the dissonant principle lost its inherent tension, its ability to express menace and conflict. Equally, however, it matters that dissonance is not just subjected to a fatuous resolution with harmony, like the medieval cosmology by which good will always triumph over evil. As Acquisto puts it, 'For Adorno as for Baudelaire, it is not a matter of giving new priority to dissonance by exposing harmony as dissonance but rather of coming to a new understanding of the way the two are imbricated ... an articulation of their mutually constitutive relationship'.

On the topic of the transformed subject-object relations made possible by Baudelaire's poetry, in many of the most highly charged lyrics in *Les Fleurs du Mal* (1857), Acquisto is particularly astute. He emphasises the apparently paradoxical postulate in Adorno that what speaks in art is not the author but the artwork itself, which achieves its effects through its interaction with a subject who is prepared to become immersed in it, rather than incorporating it into their own existing aesthetic experience. An adroit analysis of the extraordinary poem 'Le Goût du Néant' in the Coda and Conclusion chapter of this book highlights the process. The poet apostrophises his own spent soul in tones of dejected passivity: 'L'Espoir, dont l'éperon attisait ton ardeur, / Ne veut plus t'enfourcher' ['Hope, whose spur fanned your ardour into flame, / No longer wishes to mount you']. To the morose sensibility of the lyric subject here, hope is not an attitude to be adopted by effort of will, but an external agent, personified as a horse-rider whose spurs roused up his soul to the ardour that inspired him to fight, with a brutality more than faintly suggestive of sexual domination. Now the rider disdains to mount the old nag, who can be left to the slumber of the exhausted brute beast. (Incidentally, I wonder that Acquisto, whose adept translations of other French references inspire confidence, did not seek to modify the occasional *faux accord* of William Aggeler's 1954 translations of *Les Fleurs du Mal*. In the lines quoted above, Aggeler has given the French verb *attisait* as 'fanned'. Spurs are not capable of fanning, 'Stirred' would have been lexically coherent and nearer to the original.)

As with many of these poems, there is a discursive slippage between I and you, often marked by the poet addressing himself by means of an objectifying distance. Another Baudelairean technique is the pre-emptively cinematic move of pulling away from a small detail to a much larger encompassing context, so that in 'Le Goût du Néant', we move from the stumbling, slumbering horse to the engulfment of Time itself like an immense snowfall, and nothing less than the cosmological view – 'Je contemple d'en haut le globe en sa rondeur' ['I survey from above the roundness of the globe'] – in which this 'I', whoever that may be, realises the futility of seeking any kind of existential shelter. The final line invokes the snows again, in a vision of subjecthood being dashed away: 'Avalanche, veux-tu m'emporter dans ta chute?' ['Avalanche, will you sweep me along in your fall?']. It would turn up as one of the epigraphs in *Minima Moralia*.



There are continuities between Adorno's insistence on the need for critical reflection on what art cannot directly say and the technique of Baudelaire's prose poems. What is determined by the concept in aesthetic experience is not in itself conceptual, a theme that was elaborated throughout *Negative Dialectics* (1966). The immaterial, yet visceral, notion of the 'shudder' in Adorno could have been formulated with Baudelaire specifically in mind. It refers back to the fear that an unintelligible natural world once inspired, which was progressively transmuted into the aesthetic effect of the way nature is treated in art. Subsisting in modern artworks is the fear that fear might dissipate, that the truth that primal fear once registered is relentlessly vanquished by the instrumental rationality of Enlightenment thinking, to which art raises an inarticulable protest. In the appearances of artworks, the immediate impressions they make, lies the contradictory unity, the sublation, of what vanishes and what is preserved. Or, as it is expressed in *Negative Dialectics*, 'we despair of what is, and our despair spreads to the transcendental ideas that used to call a halt to despair'. If the world is not redeemable by a force we cannot presently imagine, there is no chance of feeling truly alive in it, but the apparently permanent elusiveness of redemption is what imbued so much modernist art with the theme of hopeless waiting, from Baudelaire to Beckett, and its modal preference for sardonic, mirthless humour. In 'Perte d'Auréole', the poet's halo drops off and rolls into the mud of the city street. His friend urges him to pick it up, but no. Let some other fool purloin it and try it on for size. That would at least be good for a laugh.

STUART WALTON  
Torquay, UK

WITHOUT MODEL: PARVA AESTHETICA. By Theodor W. Adorno. Translated by Wieland Hoban. Kolkata: Seagull Books, 2023. 177 pp.

To add to the English language library of Adorno's writings on aesthetics, Seagull Books of India have brought out a translation of a slim miscellany under the title *Without Model*. This was originally published in 1968 as *Ohne Leitbild: Parva Aesthetica*, and is something of a grab-bag of heterogeneous pieces, ranging from high theory to personal reflection and reminiscence. It appeared in the same year as Adorno's rather loosely organised monograph on Alban Berg, and seems to have represented something of a stopgap while the *Aesthetic Theory* was germinating. Many of the items in *Ohne Leitbild* have appeared in one-off English renderings in other anthologies over the years, but they arrive now in their original format, unified by a mostly efficient translation by the seasoned Adorno translator, Wieland Hoban.

The essays 'On Tradition', 'Theses on the Sociology of Art' and 'The Misused Baroque' are Adorno at his most dialectically agile, reflecting on the relation between past and present, and the social effect that the commodification of art has in the administered world. In the first of these pieces, he suggests that relics of past art that are celebrated as components of a monumental heritage are worshipped for their timeless significance, precisely so that nothing will change in the present, 'except through increasing confinement and ossification'. An address to a convocation of architects, 'Functionalism Today', represented a new disciplinary departure, while the previously translated 'The Culture Industry: A Resumé' returns to the now notorious chapter in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), in which Adorno and Max Horkheimer convicted the popular entertainment business of colluding in mass deception and stultification. Its findings and categories are robustly defended: '[i]f the masses are unjustly disdained from above as mere masses, it is not least the culture industry that turns them into the masses it then despises'. It is hard to believe that, were he living at this hour,

anything about the present-day culture industry would inspire Adorno to soften the crushing verdict of the 1940s.

Elsewhere, we meet Charlie Chaplin at a party in Malibu during the war, essaying a pitch-perfect gestural impersonation of Adorno; the man himself perusing the impressionist paintings in the Jeu de Paume; reflecting on the Italian temperament on vacation in Lucca; lamenting the loss of atmosphere at the Prater fairground in Vienna, before going to see Irmgard Seefried sing Marie in *The Bartered Bride* at the Staatsoper; ruminating in his beloved Amorbach, the Bavarian scene of idyllic childhood holidays; and engaging in a little intellectual detective work in Sils Maria, where a guest-book at the Hotel Privata still bears Nietzsche's signature from the nineteenth century. In a grocery shop there, Adorno and Herbert Marcuse were once regaled by the owner, one Herr Zuan, with an anecdote to treasure. A band of mischievous children, of whom Zuan had been one, filled Nietzsche's furled umbrella with little stones, so that when he went out, rain or shine, for his constitutional, plotting an eternal return and saying 'Yes' to the whole of existence, his head was pelted on opening it. Hearing the peals of youthful laughter, he tried chasing the children, but could not catch them. The pang of sympathy Adorno registers at the tale dissolves to a supposition that Nietzsche probably, on reflection, acknowledged the children's merriment as the very life-force that he celebrated as standing in defiance of the arid motions of the spirit.

*Without Model*, which might have been better rendered as *No Bigger Picture* to denote the miscellaneous nature of the collection, permits a glimpse of a thinker still at the peak of his intellectual powers, but happy to relax a little in public. What Adorno calls 'the language of the self's free expression' in Romantic music after Beethoven is on abundant display here too.

STUART WALTON

Torquay, UK

THE SOCIAL AESTHETICS OF HUMAN ENVIRONMENTS: CRITICAL THEMES. By Arnold Berleant. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. 204 pp.

There often arises a conceptual conflict when two distinct ideas shape a new rationale. Is the human environment constructed of only immediate surroundings? Or, is it also the construction of considered decisions to meet immediate needs? Most crucially, can aesthetic be an effective tool of social critique? To these inquiries, Arnold Berleant's *The Social Aesthetics of Human Environments: Critical Themes* critically opens up with the discussion on the formative presence of 'social,' in 'aesthetics,' in the present discourse of environmental aesthetics. The book takes the readers through some thought-provoking original as well as well-known conceptions within the environmental and aesthetical discourse from the East and the West to felicitate the readers with a holistic understanding of aesthetics as a tool of social critique.

Berleant purposefully traces the root of the term 'aesthetic' only to ensure that the basic idea of aesthetics is grounded in sense perception; and, perceptual experience is never pure sensation but coated with associations, history, meaning and somatic memories. The book exemplifies the scope of aesthetics for a critical assessment of social practices realising the fact that it is our excessive consumer behaviour that devalizes the very ground of our sustainability. Hence, it promulgates to safeguard aesthetic, qualitatively perceptual values, to promise a global civilization that is both ecologically sound and morally humane. Being focused on the evolution of different art movements, the author portrays how the aesthetics of an object has changed to the aesthetics of experience/sensibility. Modern art became the narrative of transformation, witnessing the audience no more as spectators but rather as participants and co-creators, and responding intellectually and emotionally

to its social critique. With this, the academic world witnessed the transformation in existing aesthetic theory where aesthetic appreciation was no longer focused on a discrete object, but within a situation, that is, contextual. Thus, the first part of the book concludes by briefing how the human environment became the locus of aesthetic investigation.

The second part of the book remarkably draws references from various sources to delimit social aesthetics, emphasizing that "sensibility," an advanced cognizance of perceptual experience, is key to the aesthetic value ascribed to art and nature. It critically elaborates on how the usage of "the" environment turns our immediate surroundings into an object separate from the perceiver. To confirm this, he cites social psychologists Kurt Lewin and J. J. Gibson who saw environment as not just an open space comprising independent objects but rather as a field of compelling forces that involves the human participant. That is, the human environment not only comprises natural things but also their social and environmental relationships, which is an aesthetic dimension that goes unnoticed. Thus, Berleant makes it easy to see how aesthetic engagement recounts human relations permeating a social situation. The book, then, demonstrates that aesthetic presence is an integral part of social relations, and its influence can enhance aesthetic engagement through educational practices and environmental designs. It is revealed that aesthetic is a distinctive experiential character of a situation, and not a substance, an object, a quality, or a feeling. It is an experience that exhibits four principal aspects: creative, performative, appreciative and focused, which occur in different environmental settings and in everyday life situations. Here, the book suitably exemplifies educational binary relations between teacher and student to exhibit that aesthetic is an experiential, perceptual process reciprocally influenced by environmental factors such as space, quiet, visual and physical comfort, and stimulation, which can transmute the experience and stimulate the outcome. Thus, the book makes sure to provide suitable illustrations to avoid ambiguity, which makes the reader stay focused on the critical discourse.

It is noticeable to see that the book always takes the readers to the founding notions of a term for its basic understanding. For this purpose, the third part of the book starts with a discussion on environment, aesthetics, and ecology to provide conceptual clarity. Environment is seen as to be inviting an inclusive understanding rather than just climate change and crisis, embracing preservation and protection of resources, public policy making, recreation and enjoyment. For this, the sensible experience of environment stands out as a peculiar experience. Hence, aesthetics comes at the centre to play its role as part of the human experience of the environment. Adding to this, environment and aesthetics get further clarified with conceptual simplification of ecology. Ecological perspective sees environment as a system of interdependent participating factors, which makes environment an unstable complex in precarious balance to sustain its coherence but never united. Therefore, environment should be considered all-inclusive with nothing outside or apart, which makes it clear that ecological aesthetics is inseparable from ecological ethics. Further, it is not only the environment that is a complex whole, but also human experience; for understanding experience is crucial to understanding environment. Since human experience is contextual, it can be experienced ecologically, and since experience is primarily perceptual, it is always aesthetic. So, the idea of environment is basically ecological aesthetics, and the aesthetics of environment is ecological. Thus, environmental aesthetics translates ecology into experience. Central to this discourse is the distinction between the Western and Eastern experiences of the natural world. Here, the book sturdily exposes Western cultures which, unlike Eastern cultures, present a sense of separation of humans from the natural world, rooted in the sources of the Hebrew Bible and Platonic Philosophy. This further influenced the Western culture linguistically, which turned environment into an object to be exploited. Hence, the book stresses the important of recognizing the basic cultural differences to understand environment conceptually rather than just perceptually. This connected illustration of the book augments its discourse and provides the readers with a critical impetus for the topic.

The fourth part of the book, henceforth, is dedicated to Disney World to critically expose its perceptual dimensions through sensory qualities which, combined with knowledge, create a unified

experiential situation. The book exposes the realities of Disney World by showing the reader its lucrative ambience which offers us a distinct, individual domain of time, place, or pursuit. Such offerings suspend people's typical attitude and behaviour, making the environment carefree. The inherent postmodernity of the Disney World environment and its multiple meanings label it as a monument of consumer culture where "everything is converted into matter for consumption: national and ethnic traditions, science, technology, education. Even the family is transformed into a unit of consumption" (p.77). Hence, Disney World is indeed the quintessence of consumer culture. Here, the book remarkably reveals the exploitation of people's sensibility by rendering the "co-optation" ("appropriation") technique, which is a tool to victimise people in contemporary corporate culture. The reviewer observes that this accounts for the author's idea of 'critical aesthetics', an aesthetics of social and political critique, as crucial to understanding social aesthetics.

The book takes a stimulating turn in the fifth part, engaging with the topic of 'negative aesthetics' and dealing with the nature of aesthetics in terrorism and other violent activities. Taking help from Burke's and Kant's ideas of the sublime, the author critically appraises terrorist activities as a source of the sublime, evoking the Mathematical Sublime, and, aesthetic in violence as a kind of disinterested engagement, as proposed by Kant. Here, the author evaluates that there is undeniably an aesthetic pleasure in the benign sensible experience of the destructive and violent forces in the human environment, and shows how acts of violence and terrorism have been a prolific element in different forms of art since antiquity. Hence, the aesthetic of violence is unqualifiedly negative and appalling. It should be noted here, the author stresses, that the culprits of terror may be disinterested and victims impersonal, but the sensible experience of witness is personal and compelling—aesthetically engaged, which is intimidating to the human environment, hence, condemnable. Henceforth, dwelling on the idea of postmodernism in the sixth part of the book, the author confirms that the postmodern sublime is, both dynamically and mathematically, a negative sublime.

The concluding section, the seventh part of the book, sketches out the case for a social aesthetics through its contextual theory. Berleant is elaborative here to illustrate that a number of factors—acceptance, perception, sensuousness, discovery, uniqueness, reciprocity, continuity, engagement, and multiplicity—combine in an inclusive situation of human environment. It is vital to see how these contextual characters bear a remarkable resemblance to human relations and reveal the social significance of the aesthetic. The book shows that all the situational arts—architecture, film, theatre and television—exemplify a distinct mode of aesthetic engagement and constitute a sequence of aesthetic situations which are fundamentally social. In a broader perspective, social aesthetics forms an aesthetic community that unites the realms of art, human and nature. In short, aesthetics is indeed an effective tool of social critique, which the book establishes through its well-knitted discussions on various realms of environmental aesthetic discourse.

To mention specifically, the book raises some pertinent questions in all its seven parts, which critically enlighten the reader to seek their answers in the subsequent proceedings. Thus, the reader keeps on building ideas and resolving the raised issues through the running discourse. Though the book displays a great deal with some of the well-known discourse of aesthetics, however, its topicality is exemplified through the interweaving discussions of the original propositions. The broad range of references and citations used in the book find their cruciality in establishing aesthetics as a tool of social critique. Thus, the book offers several facets of aesthetic discourse which unleashes many novel perspectives to critique the world of human environment, which scholars may find as a crucial tool of social aesthetics to perceive human engagements in the world distinctively.

PANKAJ KUMAR VERMA  
Woxsen University, Hyderabad, India

ANTHROPOCENE: CLIMATE CHANGE, CONTAGION AND CONSOLATION. By Sudeep Sen. London: Pippa Rann Books and Media, 2021. 176 pp.

Poet, critic, and translator, Sudeep Sen's latest collection *Anthropocene: Climate Change, Contagion, Consolation* is a creative response to the issues of climate change, pandemic recuperation, and the role of a poet in global crisis. As an author with multifaceted talents, Sen's poetic craftsmanship along with his photographic skills have combined to produce an aesthetic commentary on the effects of climate change; an issue that demands immediate redressal. Written in the backdrop of a raging pandemic, the book catalogues the issues threatening the natural world, including climate change, pollution, geological cataclysm, and above all, the stoic attitude of people amid a global catastrophe, through a range of poems, photographs, and creative non-fiction.

Reminiscent of an anthology's sectarian divide, the poems in the collection are divided into nine sections that deal with the repercussions of climate change, the zeitgeist of the pandemic, and the creative process behind the art of writing. In the section 'Anthropocene: climate change', Sen describes the effects of rising temperatures "desiccating our throats, parched lungs heaving, breathless, killing us" (39). The sharp, cutting-edge imagery, with a blend of realism and imagination, exhorts one to realise the seriousness of the present scenario. In 'Heat Sand', the poet speaks of the "deathly touch" of weather, invoked by man's callousness (40). The privileging of technology and luxury over nature is mocked in 'Concrete Graves' where "skeletal skyscrapers, unfinished flyovers collapse prematurely" (43). In 'Love in the Time of Corona', the poet brings our attention to the condition of migrant workers during the pandemic whose "hungry footsteps on empty highways accentuate an irony- social distancing a privilege only powerful can afford" (52). Here, the poem mocks the exasperating laws brought in by the authorities, such as 'social distancing' and 'work from home' which is unthinkable for people who work in fields and live in ghettos. It seems that the poet is quite taken aback by the segregating aspect of these laws that turn a blind eye to the marginalised. The ironic response of humans to a disease that shows no distinction, killing rich and poor alike, is brought forth through crude, painstaking imagery.

In addition to his response to climate change and the pandemic, the book also encapsulates the author's ruminations on the art of writing. In the section 'Lockdown: Reading, Writing', the poet speaks of his confinement to the world of papers, pens, and books. This 'self-imposed quarantine', as mentioned by the poet, served as an ideal ground for his poetic creation. At the same time, the problems outside adversely affected his health, which he tries to combat through his poems. The poem 'Asthma' recounts his troubles with asthma, which appears as a synecdoche for humanity grappled by pollution. In 'Fever Pitch' a creative piece of non-fiction, Sen narrates with scientific precision the body's mechanism to cope with the rising temperature including a fantastic detailing of the working of vaccines and thermometers; a symbolic expression of his philosophy on art and life. As a keen observer of life and objects, Sen's poems capture every aspect of change taking place in the natural world such as the changes happening to the sea, soil, forests, and flowers as a result of rising temperatures.

Apart from the changes happening in the outside world, the poet also ponders upon the inner turmoil faced by humans in the vent of a grave pandemic. The psychological trauma inflicted due to man's inability to adapt to such abrupt changes is intertwined with the poet's own experience of living in quarantine. According to the poet, isolation is a blissful experience when it is voluntarily chosen. Seeking solitude by oneself and its imposition by an external agency are two different things that the author has demarcated through his own experience. While the former is welcoming and blissful, the latter is a stifling and gruesome experience.



The author has also added poems that describe the very process of writing, especially his poetic musings during the time of the pandemic. Though these poems might initially seem detached from the book's overall content, they justify his poetic ideas which were influenced by the changes happening around the world. One can see a blend of personal and political in the poems of Sen, especially when he narrates how the pandemic has relinquished the existing structures and given rise to new forms. In 'Speaking in Silence', the poet speaks of how social distancing has defied concepts of state and statelessness. The imbalance at the political level coupled with the inadequacy of bureaucrats to work alongside the changing times is confronted through sharp, piercing expressions. The lines, "As the world pandemically wrestles with dry heat of disease and pestilence- profiteers pry, pilfer" (59) reckon with the insensitivity of humans in the age of a global crisis. Above all, the book is a reminder that all man-made structures ranging from social to political and economic are solely dependent on the sustenance of the earth. The author's dissatisfaction with the authorities' negligent attitude towards environmental issues is brought forth through images of uprooted trees, submerged cars, and soaked books floating on streets. The epilogue section serves as a genuine plea for humanity to reinstate hope and embrace healing.

In terms of theme and perspective, *Anthropocene* bears a striking resemblance to Amitav Ghosh's *The Great Derangement*, a brilliant piece of non-fiction that describes how the problem of climate change had been neglected for years. However, the distinctiveness of Sen's book lies in his style of employing poetry and creative non-fiction to address contemporary issues. A variety of poetic forms such as free verse, haiku, couplets, and prose poetry are used to illustrate issues of climate change, pandemic, and isolation. The photographs of landscapes and newspaper reports, added along with the poems, conjoin with his discussions on climate change adding a tinge of visual entreat to the narrative. In this regard, his book has gone a step ahead by showing its readers how stifling issues can be addressed through a creative piece of work. One need not always resort to naturalistic Artaudian inventions to stress the magnanimity of a cause. Rather, its seriousness can be effectively conveyed using surrealistic imagery or techniques of intertextuality which the author had profusely made use of. The rhetorics of narrative are impressive, but at the same time troublesome for readers who are not used to such literary conventions.

The entire book can be framed as a modernist narrative with its free-play of allusions and intertextual elements making the work a perfect combination of creative and critical thinking. In a way, *Anthropocene* is a testament to the power of fiction in addressing serious issues and also an affirmation of the imperishability of art. It bears testimony to the words of Brecht which the author himself has stated in his book- "In the dark times, will there also be singing? Yes, there will also be singing. About the dark times" (52).

SREELAKSHMI RENJITH  
University of Edinburgh, UK

TRANSLATION OF CONTEMPORARY TAIWAN LITERATURE IN A CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXT: A TRANSLATION STUDIES PERSPECTIVE. By Szu-Wen Kung. London, NY: Routledge, 2021. ix+137 pp.

Translation Studies has gained academic respectability and established itself a distinctive terrain of its own. During this process, it has advocated closer relations with related disciplines borrowing from some and in turn cross-fertilizing others. Far from being considered merely as a minor branch of comparative literary study, or a specific area of linguistics, translation studies is today

regarded as an independent field of study by right. As Holmes (1972/1988) asserts, “in response to the manifold trajectories of enquiry, translation studies have taken different approaches or turns by borrowing theoretical frame-works and concepts from other disciplines to study the sophisticated phenomenon of translating and translation”. Such moves toward interdisciplinarity allows translation studies to facilitate new angles of examining translation and have opened up a variety of research avenues in exploring translation as a cross-cultural activity.

It is against the backdrop of this interdisciplinarity that Szu-Wen Kung incorporates conceptual frameworks originating from linguistics, sociology and cultural studies to construe the translation activity of contemporary Taiwan literature. He provides an integrated discussion of both the descriptive account and analytical examination of the translation phenomenon of contemporary Taiwan literature in the Anglo-American context. Kung considers the English translation of Taiwan literature in the context of cross-cultural exchange not only as a linguistic act, but also as a complex cultural, ideological and political maneuver involving negotiations, interpretations, compromises and interactions between two cultures and among various translation players. Through thematic discussions of selected case studies, the four-chapter book uses four main theoretical approaches; sociological theories, cultural and rewriting theories, English as a *lingua franca*, and social and performative linguistics to uncover the world of Contemporary Taiwan literature translation.

In the introduction, Kung discusses the interdisciplinarity of Translation Studies from James Holmes’ (1972) seminal paper ‘Name and nature of Translation Studies’ where he proposed to treat Translation Studies as a discipline proper, to Bassnett (2002) who recognized translation studies for its great potential as ‘not merely a minor branch of comparative literary study, nor yet a specific area of linguistics, but a vastly complex field with many far-reaching ramifications’ (2002: 11). Kung argues that by accentuating the multi-faceted ramifications of the translation activity, the epistemological quest of translation phenomenon within the field has gone beyond the sterile debates of literal translation versus free translation. (p. 3)

The advent of the cultural turn has particularly unleashed interdisciplinary research interest in translation studies. This interdisciplinary approach is suitable for the study of the translation of Taiwan literature as it allows for the exploration of a range of interrelated yet distinct points of discussion, amounting to a redefinition of translation and its practice.

The translation of Chinese literature from Taiwan has been carried out for over half a century with two major trends; translations initiated by the source culture and commerce-based translations. The former was carried out with the purpose of promoting selected literary works from Taiwan in the global community, particularly in the Anglo-American cultural sphere, while the later was carried out by individuals for commercial purposes. Source culture-initiated translations faced several challenges both at the micro-level of textual transference and individual interference, and at the macro-level of socio-cultural influence since they were carried out largely by the less dominant culture and exported to the dominant one. Commerce-based translations faced the challenge of finding publishers partly because it is often costlier to publish a translated book than the indigenous book since the publishers need to pay for translation rights. (p. 6)

In Chapter one, Kung applies the sociological theories of prominent French sociologists, Pierre Bourdieu (Theory of Social Practice) and Bruno Latour’s (Action Network Theory ANT) to conceptualize the translation of Taiwan literature as a social practice that is inseparable from the translation agents’ mediation and integrally associated with the social context within which translation takes place. The chapter begins by defining various sociological approaches in translation studies over the last twenty-years and offers methodological concepts and descriptive strategies that illuminate the social nature of translation, including the composition of an open discourse on translation and the social profiles of translation players.

By conceptualizing translation as an act that is deeply rooted in the socio-cultural contexts in which it is performed, Kung seeks to bring to light a number of salient issues amongst which is the

role of translation in the production of cultural goods within a global context. The following sections explore the subsequent development of the field through significant case studies of the production of translated Taiwan literature by examining the pioneering efforts of individual players in translating and producing Taiwan literature. He shows how the solitary work of key translation actors like Mrs. Nancy Ing and Professor Pang-Yuan Chi (two of the pioneers who initiated the translation of Taiwan literature) was vital for the subsequent formation of a network for the translation of Taiwan literature and its construction as a field. The subsequent discussion shifts to more systematic projects entailing the translation and promotion of literature from Taiwan informed by Bourdieu's concepts of capital and field, and by Latour's ANT. The analysis focuses on the roles and social influences of different translation players within the translation process, especially on the process of network formation. Kung argues that the social standing of the individual translation agents, especially their cultural and social capital, were critical factors influencing the early development of translation work.

It is argued that a systematic approach for the production of translated Taiwan literature can be more effectively achieved via the consistent participation of actors with varying social power. Kung discusses cross-cultural networks in the production of translations through two exemplary case studies that illuminate the process of producing translations of Taiwan literature commencing from the 1990s and continuing to the present. These were; *Taiwan Literature: English Translation Series* a journal that translates and publishes Taiwan literature of various genres and *Modern Chinese Literature from Taiwan*. The case of *Taiwan Literature: English Translation Series* illustrates how a translation production process that involves actors with varying resources and degrees of social influence can operate more efficiently in achieving the founding objective of the key actor who initiated these activities.

Chapter Two explores the translation of Taiwan literature from the perspective of the cultural turn. It conceptualizes how the original text can be rewritten in a manner in which the embedded source culture is represented, particularly in the context of ideological and aesthetic factors that influence the translation production process. This chapter also presents an examination of the ideological and aesthetic expectations of the target culture towards translations. It simultaneously shows how translation functions as a form of rewriting that contributes to the generation of cultural initiatives for assimilating the translated literature into the poetics of the target culture. The case studies presented underscore the theoretical value of applying cultural approaches in translation research, which enables researchers to extend well beyond mere comparisons between the originals and the translations.

After theorizing the cultural turn and the relevance of paratexts (the sub-textual and textual elements within or around the key texts) to translation studies, Kung analyses how the ideological perspectives of the concerned translation actors can influence the selection of the source text to be translated and the image of the source text to be re-represented. In the next section, Kung examines translation as a rewriting process in the context of anthologization and paratext. Lefevere (1992b) considers 'anthologization as a form of rewriting like translation, one of the key methods through which translation players collect, edit, and repackage the original text as translations. After presenting the views of various writers, Kung states that anthologisation has been widely used to represent literary works from Taiwan in the form of English translations. The discussion provides a general overview of the process whereby the image associated with a particular literature is reshaped over time, which in turn reflects the social, cultural, and literary evolution of the source culture.

In Chapter three, Kung approaches the translation of Taiwan literature from the perspective of English as a lingua franca (ELF). He examines how the role of ELF can impact on the final presentation of a translated work with reference to a case study of the translation of the Taiwanese novel, *Wintry Night*. Characteristically neutral and with more variability in terms of its language functions, Kung argues that English evidences a strong tendency to be substantially negotiated, integrated, and adapted inter-lingually as well as inter-culturally, depending on the communicative purpose and context.

As the prevailing language and the most important lingua franca globally, English is a vehicular language that can be more broadly conceptualized. A textual analysis of translations enables a reconsideration of the paradoxical dual roles that English has been assumed to have. The fluent translation discourse revealed in the case studies seemingly confirms Venuti's argument relating to 'the violence of translation' (2008: 13), as the dominant discourse of domestication is evident in the translation of *Wintry Night*. The case study reveals, the source text is reconstituted in alignment with the beliefs, values, and representations entailed in the English language.

Chapter Four uses linguistic approaches to examine the translation of Taiwan literature which Kung describes as 'an act that is performed on the language in which the literary work, imbued with a cacophonous conversational chorus, is conveyed. (p. 103) The chapter begins with a dualist view on the linguistic approaches to translation studies. The debate centers on the challenging and inevitable complex relationship between translation and linguistics. On the one hand, linguistic scholars like Catford (1965/2000) have argued that a theory of language must be applied in any attempts to theorize translation; that is, only linguistic theories can adequately explain the phenomenon of translation while other scholars have consistently argued that linguistic activity is indeed a translation phenomenon, but only partially.

According to the first approach, only linguistic theories can elucidate translation phenomena. An examination of translation based on this approach entails recognition and delineation of language variations in different situations. According to the second approach, linguistic theories can be applied to examine translation itself, viewed as integral as opposed to highly limited elements confined within the text to be translated. The author goes on to present a comparison of performative linguistics and constative linguistics and their application to translation studies. In contrast to the formalistic and depersonalized approach of constative linguistics that focuses on the 'state of affairs' or a rule-based description of language, performative linguistics is concerned with how a language is used in real-world contexts. These contexts are inseparable from the interrelations among multiple language users as the speakers, writers, and receivers of a language, who interpret both spoken and written utterances. The contexts in which languages are used are among the most important considerations when examining language phenomena from the perspective of performative linguistics.

Kung uses *Rose, Rose, I Love You*, authored by ChenHo Wang, a nativist writer, and its English version translated by Howard Goldblatt as a case study for the investigation. This novel is known for its adroit application of multilingualism, spanning Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, and English, which are spoken by the characters in the novel. Overall, this chapter examines how the literary translator mediates linguistic and dialectical language features, revealing how the textual mediation of the originally performed source language is creatively reperformed in a cross-cultural context.

Through the lens of translation studies, Kung in this book demonstrates how the interdisciplinarity of translation studies offers substantial insights into fundamental and intricate issues concerning translation as a cross-cultural activity. The book represents one of the first endeavors to establish the overall conceptualization of the translation of Taiwan literature in the Western context and provides systematic insights into the translation phenomenon of Taiwan literature and its implications. It contributes to a clearer understanding of the translations of culture-specific literature as linguistic and cultural representations. It is a useful read to scholars and students working on translation and cultural studies, China/Taiwan literature studies, and literature studies in cross-cultural contexts.

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CHI DEREK ASABA  
*Shanghai Jiao Tong University, China*

COMPARATIVE EVERYDAY AESTHETICS: EAST-WEST STUDIES IN CONTEMPORARY LIVING. By Eva Kit Wah Man and Jeffrey Petts (Eds). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023. 296 pp.

Does beauty reside in that which is exceptional and must aesthetics concern itself only with what gets labelled as “art”? A recent edited volume identifies newer ways of experiencing beauty and practising aesthetic theory by drawing attention to everydayness as the space of the beautiful. Edited by Eva Kit Wah Man and Jeffrey Petts, *Comparative Everyday Aesthetics: East-West Studies in Contemporary Living* expands the breadth of philosophical engagement to everyday life and thus breaks the distinction between the exceptional and the banal. The result is not just insights into the loosening up of the category of pleasure but an enhancement of hope for and meaning of pleasure by general readers who may not be grounded in aesthetics as a discipline. In the examples shared in the individual chapters of the volume, beauty becomes an all-pervasive thing, present in every detail of life as it is lived.

The six sections in the book speak of different aspects of everydayness that deserve a rich engagement from people as well as scholars. These are aspects that make abstract concepts of art or beauty concrete as manifested in Daoist pursuits, nature, food and drinking, technology, and relationships. A very dazzling instance is that of tea. Tea, in itself, might be of interest to connoisseurs who can identify the different types of taste of various kinds. But what makes tea a subject of inquiry from the lens of everyday aesthetics is the set of details that emerge in comparisons between cultures as they drink tea. For the English, inventing handles for their tea cups was a necessity because they wanted to avoid contact with the hot surface of the cup. However, for the Chinese, who never saw the need for one, a handle would interfere with the intimacy a drinker would experience with the cup when drinking tea. Similarly, tea easily fit into the idea of English breakfast while for the Chinese, tea time is a separate hour because tea tasting for them was “the pinnacle of the art of living” (162). The Japanese bring a different twist to the practice of tea drinking: they have tea houses where it becomes a matter of performance. The two chapters on tea (one by Yanping Gao and another by Tanehisa Otabe) and the art of using chopsticks (Richard Shusterman) relate the sophistication of consuming food to the sophistication involved in the hermeneutics of food and pleasure.

The lens of comparison brings a lot of insights into concepts at hand. For instance, one realises that the difference between Eastern and Western aesthetics does not lie in the heavy critical theory import that the latter is anchored in; it also lies in the way the cultures make sense of beauty. For instance, for the Japanese, art is about ways to beautify life as a whole and because modern European art is about separating art from life, this art has been on decline. While that is a very provocative statement or comparison to make, it must be seen in the context of relative perception of art that the author of the concerned chapter seeks to make. Another instance of comparativism is the observation that Eastern philosophies such as Buddhism and Confucianism do not see the everyday in opposition to the exceptional or the artistic for according to them, that which is mundane is actually “endowed with greatness” (175) and needs to be embraced. In other words, the idea of everyday



aesthetics would come across as an ideal to live by. Similarly, the clubbing of “craft” with “art” in some contexts generally means giving due credit to rural artisans or makers of folk art. But the Zhuangzi story “Cutting up an Ox”, discussed by Jeffrey Petts, speaks of butchering as “a sacred dance” with its own “rhythm” and “timing” that does not require a plan but as “a felt consummatory moment of tasks successfully completed” (188). Skill, in other words, requires a freedom from distractions that liberate an artist within oneself, and is thus not very different from art that gets housed in galleries but is targeted at everyday consumption.

Like the subject of skill, the idea of cell phones might otherwise seem far removed from the domain of aesthetic appreciation. However, as Janet McCracken shows, cell phones need to be seen as sources of pleasure (rather than evil harbingers of addiction): their tiny form (with foldability as a recent rage that is also nostalgic throwback to an earlier era of cell phones), with evolving graphics, and their capacity to record our everyday lives and thereby “carry our personhood for us” makes them ideal for engagement as products of design aesthetics (201). They are a beautiful example of the idea of function follows form.

Every chapter in the book is better than the others in the way it brings forth the editors’ vision of putting together a collection that “contributes to that noble aim, the importance of living” (38) because the art versus non art conversation is about political and moral aims too. The most beautiful example of which is Emily Brady’s chapter on Cryosphere Aesthetics arguing that the crises of the cryosphere (the parts of earth formed by frozen water) with global warming need an environmental aesthetics that captures the loss the local communities feel intergenerationally with the melting away of ice, which has its own sensory qualities.

Carolyn Korsmeyer’s very personal chapter “Memory’s Kitchen: In Search of a Taste” relates to lived experiences across generations from a different angle. Korsmeyer talks about her attempts at baking kuchen, a sweet cake, that her grandmother knew best to bake. She has only half of the recipe and all her attempts at reconstructing that taste and the accompanying memory of herself as a young girl relishing it have failed. But the ethos behind resurrecting the recipe are not just subjective here. Her contemplations on the loss go beyond the personal. She writes, “If I fall, that word will lose its meaning, and its distinctive taste, scent, and capacity to deliver a simple and absorbing pleasure will be forgotten” (126). Her musings on the disconnect between one’s present self and memoirs of everyday things from one’s past are very evocative of the loss of something or the other that people experience as they get older.

There is a lot for many kinds of audiences in the book: an unjargoned fascination with beauty that will leave the general reader aroused to simpler things around them, a poetic quality of going beyond the surface for those interested in reading about art, and a disarming style of making high philosophy resonate with everydayness for scholars who might be looking for fresher angles to look at aesthetics.

SONI WADHWA

*SRM University, Andhra Pradesh, India*

ANGER IN THE LONG NINETEENTH CENTURY: CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES. By Ritu-shree Sengupta and Shouvik N. Hore (Eds.). UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2023. 203 pp.

Anger is hardly a new concept in the academia. It has been observed how male artists and scholars have, through the ages, wielded the power of their overflowing metaphorical pen, trying to sublimate the overwhelming beauty of nature or the chaos of the urban landscape, and by extension,

evoking emotions by expressing the inner workings of the human mind and heart when faced with such grandeur. And yet, there has hardly been a volume that addresses the anger that lurks behind these great minds. Some interdisciplinary works on anger include Linda M. Grasso's *The Artistry of Anger: Black and White Women's Literature in America, 1820–1860* (2003), Braund and Most's *Ancient Anger: Perspectives from Homer to Galen* (Yale Classical Series, 32, 2004) and Sue J. Kim's *On Anger: Race, Cognition, Narrative* (2013). *Anger in the Long Nineteenth Century: Critical Perspectives* upholds this anger and analyses it, introducing it as a concept that has always been there but hardly ever inscribed in ink. Its only precursor, Andrew M. Stauffer's *Anger, Revolution, and Romanticism* (2005), which focuses on anger in romantic greats like Burke, Coleridge, Shelley and Byron, is duly acknowledged in the concluding chapter of the volume.

Thus, in this aspect, the volume is a highly novel attempt. What adds to the novelty value is the Introduction, in which Hore chooses to study the preoccupation of the speaker of Tennyson's *Locksley Hall* with a "positive, or durable anger" (x), opting to introduce the idea of embarking on a project on the study of anger. The Introduction lacks in one thing however: it does not introduce the idea of Anger as an area of studies over the ages, culminating in perhaps its sublime best in the long 19<sup>th</sup> century, which would have helped subsequent studies on Anger. Instead, the author provides a guideline of their project as a promise of the essays to come, by penning a brief analysis of the legitimacy and durability of the poet-speaker in Tennyson's poem and a succinct commentary on the authorial attempts to follow.

The idea of the isolated, angry (jilted and essentially, Romantic) artist is taken up in the first chapter, "Romantic Rage: How Anger characterizes the Nineteenth-Century Composer", extending the analysis to such angry (anger that was often self-inflicted) composers and their four particular literary representations of 19<sup>th</sup> century, demanding love and validation from their audiences. The chapter echoes the theme the Introduction sets forward: music (or writing, or any art in general) can become "both a cause of, and remedy to, anger...as both irritant and salve..." (7) and this anger contributes to not only the expression but also, the image making of the artist (or in this essay, musician). This is followed by the next chapter exploring the range of anger in Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, perhaps one of the best fictional texts (and yet ignored, the author claims) to analyse as a part of a volume on anger, from the anger of passion to a chilly, terror inducing one through analysing the actions of characters in the novel, and leading to the gothic interrupting the domestic. The same text is examined in Chapter 6, which also pays attention to Heathcliff's anger, but from the perspective of social marginalisation.

On a similar literary note, Chapter 5 examines the angry speakers of two of Browning's most notable poems, while in Chapter 3, the volume also moves into the realm of speculative history (specifically to a more personal, narrative retelling mode) in the film, "The Raven" (2012), examining Poe's anger, especially in the days leading to his death. Chapter 4 is an almost Fanonist, postcolonial attempt at examining the anger of domestic help, in particular towards their colonial masters. As such it is a novel attempt and contributes to refashioning history through the bottom-up approach, and thus, also introduces a historical aspect to the volume. Similar to the postcolonial theme is the attempt in Chapter 8 to look at the angry domestic help living in colonised lands through the lens of Rudyard Kipling's fiction, as well as Chapter 9, that introduces Australian poetry to the volume, examining the anger in Bush poetry that pushed the emergence of an Australian nationalistic politics. This somewhat historico-political approach can be found in Chapter 7 as well, wherein the author tries to understand Swinburne's anger, directed chiefly at Napoleon for failing two consecutive republics, through a detailed analysis of his aestheticism infused with a sociopolitical motivation.

The volume culminates into an extensive authorial gradation on the process through which anger has to be taken out of its instinctive shell, linguistically expressed, addressed in its incorporated and symbolized/creative forms and deconstructed in all of its unconscious glory, which then, of course, has to be analysed through a close, analytical reading. Both the purpose and the literature/theoretical

review is well elaborated, leaving no questions unaddressed as to the motivation behind the project. The conclusion could perhaps have served better as an introduction to better ease the reader into the deep recesses of literary anger, instead of saving the best for the last. The volume also benefits from the inclusion of an original perspective on *Natyasastra*, and perhaps (along with Stauffer's work), could have benefitted even more from addressing the more feminine forms of anger coming from either the literary greats (who, in this volume, are all men, except Brontë) or even better, women philosophers and theorists, which is why it seems as though the burden of the virile, bestial and sublime anger falls on men of intellect alone. Overall, the volume is not only a welcome addition to Anger Studies, but also one of the very few volumes that can be found on the same, within the realm of literary studies.

ANKITA SUNDRIYAL  
University of Bologna, Italy

GANDHI AND THE IDEA OF SWARAJ. By Ramin Jahanbegloo. New York and Oxon: Routledge, 2023. 113 pp.

“Gandhi's project, therefore, was to transform the contingency of all the individual moments of the path of spiritual self-cultivation, political maturation, and moral growth into a historical necessity. This enterprise was not understood by him only in a sense of recalling moments of glorious Indian past, but also an effort to construct a future that opened up room for further epistemic diversity and civic toleration. This was not mere idealism.” (Jahanbegloo 23).

In his text *Gandhi and the Idea of Swaraj*, the author Ramin Jahanbegloo takes upon himself to look into the intricacies of Gandhian thought while situating them within a particular relation of human existence. This relation is drafted into a fundamental design of what M K Gandhi termed as *swaraj*. Indeed, *swaraj* was/is a design, both political and personal in praxis, outwardly manifestable from within the materiality of an anti-colonial struggle as it borders upon the contentions of a nation (particularly during the post-colonial times) or within what may constitute nationhood. It threatens its conceptualization in synonymous terms with political independence and yet admits to a ‘spirit’ beyond such a reductive definition. ‘Swaraj’, to Gandhi, is practiced in life, in actions, intentions, thoughts and thus has an ‘everyday’ resonance to it. Hence the term posits itself on the questions of sovereignty, of the self, the other, the nation and all those matrices that lay within these. This very question around sovereignty musters the central thrust in Jahanbegloo's text as he explores the myriad relations which exist between sovereignty and *swaraj*.

The text is neatly divided into five chapters with an introductory note and a conclusion. The introduction engages with two of the most constant and vital themes in Gandhi: that of experimentation and that which concerns the idea of ‘truth’. This section explores the various nuances of Gandhi's belief systems, if they could be condensed into a system at all, in relation to his socio-cultural and anti-colonial understanding. Jahanbegloo problematizes Gandhi's notion of ‘truth’ which has largely been conceived as an “outcome of a human experience and not necessarily a predicate of principles of a system of thought...” but finds an “universalizable” aspect of it which, as he argues, is by no means “exhaustive”. The author denies Gandhi to be a philosopher in the stricter connotation of the term but finds “epistemic humility” across his literary (speeches and writings) corpus which, he argues, revolves around a politics of “patience”. Jahanbegloo rightly notes, as Akeel Bilgami did, that Gandhi had refused to ‘theorize’ his ideas and indoctrinate his followers with them. Gandhi was the figure of the ‘exemplary’ who might be imitated to apprehend his values. In this discussion, Gandhian

ideas on self-governance is posited in relation to the discourses of European enlightenment philosophers like Kant and Montaigne which also expands into his anxiety of cognitive enslavement both in the contexts of epistemology and within the domain of political realities.

This anxiety, to the author, defines Gandhi's 'politics with conscience'; that which he discusses in the first chapter of his text. The chapter, entitled as "Politics with Conscience: Parrhesia and Maturity", traces back the forms of discussion and debate during the Greco-Roman classical period. He explores the forms of democratic practices in Greek city-states, particularly Athens, and the culture of what he records as 'truth-telling'. Such truth-telling, known as *parrhesia* in Greek, was eulogized in Athens and Jahanbegloo finds a suitable successor of such cultural ethos in Gandhi. The author re-reads sections from figures like Socrates and Pericles in this context and marks the curious, almost obsessive relation of truth to politics in M K Gandhi.

The second chapter, "Swaraj: Empathetic Emancipation and Common Humanity" proposes to look into values like empathy, toleration, courage, active but non-violent protestation in relation to sacrifice and suffering and the possibilities of undercutting the divides which exist between personal and political spheres of life. These issues have been explored in relation to the greater question of what may concepts like 'freedom' or 'independence'. The author notes that *swaraj* is not synonymous to any of these two terms. This insufficiency of language to define what *swaraj* meant to Gandhi leaves more room to inquire for a more inclusive and a more experiential thought-form which would remain for a time to come but with its seeds in the present. Such experiences, as Gandhi himself reiterated, are not abstract but collected from quotidian incidents and from their impressions which are casted on the self. Such impressions are subjected to both the test of conscience and reason (to Gandhi, reason and conscience bordered upon one another) and thus the author attempts to locate it with a Socratic methodology. This forms the deeper part of his pursuit in the third chapter entitled "Satyagraha: Socratic Self-Examination and Nonviolent Citizenry".

Jahanbegloo's examination culminates in what he calls the "anti-political politics of Gandhi" which, to him, is the manifestation of one's own conscience. The author cites the Czech artist-cum-president's essay "Politics and Conscience" to emphasize on the requirement of 'dissent' as the "opportunity" and "duty" to testify and apprehend every experience. He draws in a careful but curious psychological possibility of relating the (un/sub)conscious layers of human mind with the values which both stem out from then only to govern them in turn. In this chapter, "Anti-Political Politics and Internal Democracy", the author perhaps puts up the most significant part of his argument where he argues for an idea of "shared sovereignty" in Gandhi. This sovereignty establishes its variability in striking a dialogue with the self, the 'other' and the government. The final chapter is a detailed elucidation of the possibilities at such politics which he believes to lay in the Gandhian 'moral obligation' to disobey and protest. Almost echoing Levinas' ethical encounter, the author finds 'care' (notably a Heideggerian term) as central to the politics of Gandhi. In conclusion, all these facets of Gandhi's moral economy are condensed into the possibility of a realization; that of an internal unity of all beings.

This text has attempted to look into the deeper nuances of Gandhi's thought as it refers back to a significant corpus of Gandhi's essential writings. However, the most important contribution of the text may lay in its subtle resonances which engage in a dialogue with many theorists/philosophers and Gandhian scholars and spearhead it further. For instances, Jahanbegloo's notion of 'shared sovereignty' in Gandhi may speak back to Ajay Skaria's understanding of 'unconditional equality' and the dismantling of the self as a rigid or composite being. Jahanbegloo notes that sovereignty of the self is always in question with the sovereignty of others and of the whole cultural spirit within mankind. Similarly, the author discusses bravery (which Gandhi himself discusses a few times to contest the validity of non-violence) which adds on to Skaria's notions of 'immeasurable suffering' both for the othered figure and for truth. Another instance may be noted in Akeel Bilgrami's understanding of Gandhi as the exemplary and not the political leader/teacher that one conventionally finds in a statesman. The 'openness' of Gandhian thought that Jahanbegloo discusses in detail, quite

into a recurrent theme, may re-define Satish Acharya's perspective towards what Acharya calls as the "normative thought" in Gandhi or what Shasheej Hedge's marks as the notion of writing as opposed to philosophy (or judgement) in Gandhi. Finally, the very significant aspect of what the author calls as Gandhi's "anti-political politics" may be deliberated in conjunction with Reinhard Fred Dallmyr's optimism regarding the 'future' of democracy.

Therefore, this text is an important contribution to farther original and critical discourse in Gandhian scholarship and an attempt to reflect on the politics of democracies which seems so important in contemporary terms.

AYAN CHAKRABORTY

*Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi*

THE MORAL IMAGINATION OF THE MAHABHARATA. By Nikhil Govind. New Delhi: Bloomsbury, 2022. 172 pp.

In the timeless expanse of Indian literature, the *Mahabharata* stands as a monumental epic, a narrative tapestry woven with threads of virtue, vice, and the intricate dance of destiny. In the scholarly voyage undertaken by Nikhil Govind in *The Moral Imagination of the Mahabharata*, the timeless verses of the *Mahabharata* are transmuted into a nuanced exploration of the moral imagination, with a particular emphasis on the quartet of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha*. As the author deftly navigates the labyrinthine corridors of this ancient narrative, the reader is beckoned into a contemplative odyssey that transcends time, resonating with echoes of ethical dilemmas and existential quandaries that remain as pertinent today as they did millennia ago. With erudition as his compass and the literary tradition of *Mahabharata* as his literary kaleidoscope, Govind invites us to traverse the landscape of righteousness, material prosperity, desire, and spiritual liberation, challenging our perceptions and beckoning us to engage with the profound ethical calculus that animates the heart of this epic tale.

The book is thematically organised into four chapters based on the quartet of the primary goals of human existence, i.e., *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha*. This book adds to the extensive spectrum of critical discourse on the *Mahabharata*, however, what sets it apart from the rest is that in dealing with the four-fold values of *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, and *moksha*, the author does not presume the terms to be self-evident. Govind engages in a critical investigation of these concepts as he argues that contrary to the popular notion, nothing about the quartet is fixed in stone. In fact, these terms are fluid in their functionality and are contingent on the context they appear. In the introduction to this book, Govind highlights the centrality of the four-fold values in the narratological schema of the *Mahabharata* by stating that Vyasa intended *shanta rasa* and *moksha* to be the primary objectives of the narrative. "The ultimate meaning of the *Mahabharata* thus appears very clearly: the two subjects intended by the author [Vyasa] as primary are the *rasa* of peace and human goal of liberation" (1). However, unlike Vyasa, Govind professes that each of the four-fold values holds equal importance within the narratological framework of the *Mahabharata*.

The primary thesis of this book expounds that though the quartet of life goals may appear, at a cursory glance, to be in contradiction to one another, they are, in fact, complimentary to each other. The inherent conflictual tendencies of the four-fold values stem from their soteriological orientation in case of *dharma* and *moksha*, on one hand, and the worldly/materialistic orientation of *artha* and *kama*, on the other hand. The inherent contradictions of the quartet engender the moral anxieties that permeate the text of the *Mahabharata*. As Govind ponders, "Are these two aims — especially



*dharma/moksha* and *artha* — ultimately complimentary or conflictual” (46). However, he also acknowledges that none of the four-fold values could exist in isolation as they derive their “meaning only in relation to each other” (55), thereby highlighting the inter-relationality of the quartet. The *Mahabharata* itself embodies the inherent moral dilemma as it acutely engages with human and cosmic violence but also accepts and acknowledges the ultimate futility of it all. Though the text of *Mahabharata* has prominent and elaborate didactic sections such as the twelfth book of *Mahabharata*, i.e., ‘The Book of Peace’ is a strong case in point, Govind in his work instead chooses to focus on the narrative sections with the objective of unveiling “the moral heterogeneity of the *Mahabharata*” (9), and thus justifying the title of this book. Govind, in this book, attempts to construct a conceptual unity concerning the four-fold values, which is in congruence with the works of other eminent scholars such as, Alf Hiltebeitel.

While ensconcing this book firmly within the space of critical discourse on the *Mahabharata*, Govind also acknowledges the contribution of the pre-colonial scholars whose exemplary works usually get overshadowed by the plethora of Western scholarship. Govind observes the influence exerted by scholarly works and critical commentaries of erudite Indian scholars such as, Devabodha during the eleventh century in Kashmir, Arjunamishra during sixteenth century Bengal, and Appayya Dikshit during sixteenth century in Tamil Nadu. Govind’s own work is influenced by the first century Kashmiri scholar Abhinavagupta’s *rasa* theory-oriented commentary on the *Mahabharata*. Govind also notes the rupture in the Indian critical tradition brought forth by the advent of colonialism, which resulted in the European intervention in the traditional *Mahabharata* scholarship. While the pre-colonial Indian scholarship was primarily based on critical commentaries, the colonial era European scholarship, on the other hand, focused more on collection of manuscripts, translation projects and analysed the text through philological and historical frameworks. The very essence of conceptualisation and comprehension of the world differed in Indian and European scholarly tradition, which is illustrated by Govind through the binary division between nature and culture. The nature-culture binary divide is a Western notion, one that did not exist in the pre-colonial aesthetics and sensibilities of Indian philosophy and literature. Govind emphasises that in the narratological schema of the *Mahabharata*, the city or the urban space was not conceptualised as a corrupted, degenerate space in moral opposition to the pristine forest, because forest was not portrayed as a utopia but rather as a worldly space with its own share of dangers and internal politics.

The first chapter which is titled “Dharma” begins with asking the pertinent question on what makes the eighteen days war at Kurukshetra, which constitutes the central theme of *Mahabharata*, inevitable. The chapter asks of its reader whether the war could have been avoided through committed peace missions or was it pre-destined because of the martial values of the Kshatriya class. As Govind contemplates, “Is the war indeed a fate that the gods cannot stall, or is it that martial values are the motor that makes war inevitable, even desired?” (19). The author, in this chapter, emphasises the inherent contradictions embedded within the value of *dharma*, especially with reference to the futility of the peace missions and the inevitable war of death and destruction. Govind employs the narrative framework of the fifth book of *Mahabharata*, i.e., ‘The Book of Effort’ to emphasise the conflictual nature of *dharma*, as he argues that the fifth book is more appropriately positioned within the narrative than *Bhagavad Gita*, which is more commonly perceived as a treatise on the nature of *dharma*. In this chapter, Govind explicates on the different and often contradictory forms of *dharma*. Govind argues that the *dharma* of peace is in conflict with and overshadowed by the belligerent *dharma* and martial values of the Kshatriya clan. In fact, the Kshatriya *dharma* of violence permeates the frantic peace negotiations that take place before the war, which ultimately leads to the failure of the peace missions. Therefore, it becomes evident that *dharma* is a complicated value. Contrary to the popular understanding of the term, *dharma* does not entail a clear demarcation between good and bad, moral and immoral, black and white, and so on. Govind also brings forth several characters’ varied perspectives on war, which are at times in complete opposition to each other. Yudhishtira

perceives the war objectively, dispassionately and impersonally. He believes that the war constitutes his *dharma* because it would contribute to a larger cosmic cause and greater public good. While Draupadi, on the other hand, supports and argues in favour of the war because she believes it is her right, as a queen of the Pandavas, to avenge her public humiliation.

The second chapter titled “Artha” deals with the narrative sequences of Satyawati and Amba, thereby analysing the complex connection between gender politics and *artha*. In the latter part of this chapter, the author also explicates on Duryodhana’s insight into the intricacies of *artha* and worldly ambitions. The author conceptualises *artha* not merely as monetary value but as all forms of worldly and materialistic ambitions. Through the tale of Satyawati’s intense ambition to become the matriarch of the Kuru dynasty, Govind observes that even the most well-intended human actions can entail disastrous consequences, thus delving into the perennial debate about free will vs. destiny. Through the story of Amba, whose life had been one long ordeal of loss, rejection and revenge, Govind argues that austerities, which are usually associated with soteriological goals could also be employed for attaining worldly aspirations. He observes that people deeply ensconced in matters of life and world, like Amba, completely dedicate themselves to austerities not for any desire of moksha but for attaining their worldly aims, which in Amba’s case is her intense desire to bring about Bhishma’s death so that she could avenge herself. Anger, an emotion that is deprecated by every wise person including Yudhishtira, is emphasised and celebrated in Amba’s tale. Likewise, Duryodhana also exhibits intense worldly desires and materialistic attachments. Therefore, Govind ingeniously claims Duryodhana to be the truest and fittest heir of the resourceful and ambitious queen Satyawati. The author through his explication on the characters of Satyawati, Amba and Duryodhana, argues that all three of them share a strong sense of worldly obligations and ambitions. They do not shy away from claiming their stake in this world, which consequently renders them significant and powerful characters, a force to reckon with.

The third chapter titled “Kama” entails the sexual encounters and experiences of the ascetic Rishyasringa and Arjuna, as well as the romantic tale of Nala and Damayanti. Interestingly, Govind chose to delve on the ascetic Rishyasringa’s tale in a chapter on *kama* in order to understand the conflictual relationship between sexuality, desire and asceticism, which are generally perceived to be the seemingly disparate spheres of human existence. The author notes that *kama* in the diegetic schema of Mahabharata is conceptualised as transcending the straitjacketed categories of gender and even species. *Kama*, rather than merely being a physical and sensual pleasure, also embodies the interconnectedness of all beings at a higher level of consciousness. In Rishyasringa’s case, *kama* helped him in bonding socially and assisted him in assuming the social roles of husband and father. *Kama*, therefore, made him comprehend his human subjectivity and desire. For Rishyasringa, his desire and austerities were not in conflict with each other, rather his austerities complemented and whetted his experiences of desire. *Kama*, especially in the sense of extended languid, becomes a central theme in the later Sanskrit tradition of *mahakavya*. These epic narratives are mostly based on the episodes of romantic encounters, sexual escapades and intrigues in *Mahabharata*, the tale of Nala and Damayanti being one of the most favourite of Sanskrit composers.

The fourth and last chapter titled “Moksha,” the author focuses on *Harivamsha* which narrativizes the life of the divine entity Krishna and explicates on the intricacies of *moksha*. Highlighting the aim of this chapter, Govind states, “There are arguably many notions of *moksha* in the *Mahabharata*, and this chapter does not claim to explicate them all- it focuses on one indubitable strand- the life narrative of Krishna” ((113). Govind sagaciously argues that Krishna is the harbinger of a new form of divinity, while Indra and Balarama represent the older conceptualisation of divinity. Indra especially embodies the older forms of gods, who is impersonal, distant, whimsical and must always be feared and placated by the worshipper. While Krishna, on the other hand, represents a notion of divinity that is personal and intimately connected to the person lives of each and every devotee. Govind, by focussing on *Harivamsha*, also initiates a dialogue on the Bhakti movement that spanned

across India during the medieval ages, emphasising particularly on the personal devotion (*bhakti*) to Krishna, which would consequently enable the devotee to attain *moksha*.

In the conclusion, the author discusses the Sanskrit literary tradition of later period which were immensely influenced by the *Mahabharata*. The concluding section discusses in detail a fourth century Sanskrit play by Bhasa, *The Shattered Thigh*. This play presents a dramatic reimagination of the final duel between Bheema and Duryodhana. Since this play also deals extensively with moral questions and ethical dilemmas, the inclusion of a detailed analysis of this play therefore becomes a perfect conclusion to the book dealing with the moral imagination of the *Mahabharata*.

SREYA MUKHERJEE

*The English and Foreign Languages University (EFLU), Hyderabad*

DREAM PROJECTS IN THEATRE, NOVELS AND FILMS: THE WORKS OF PAUL CLAUDEL, JEAN GENET, AND FEDERICO FELLINI. By Yehuda Moraly. UK: Liverpool University Press, 2021. 224 pp.

“You shall come to Valvins and we shall dig a hole in the middle of a field and bury all this sorrowful paper. We shall make a tomb for all this paper which contains so much of my life,” (4) writes Mallarmé on his deathbed to Henri de Régnier requesting him to destroy his lifelong dreamt project *Le Livre*. In the fictional world, from Balzac’s *The Unknown Masterpiece* to Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time* and Pirandello’s *The Mountain Giants*, the existence of an ‘impossible’ art is a given. For Moraly, it is a kind of law in real life too, where ‘...artistic creation frequently, if not – at some point or another – inevitably, entails battling with a work dreamed of but which remains forever unrealized (2)’. The book furthers the research on the very process that goes behind such an artistic creation.

Originally in French, the book is called *L’oeuvre impossible*. It is a book of biographical research that deals in detail with three incomplete projects, namely; the fourth part of *Coiffontaine Tetralogy* by Paul Claudel; *La Mort* (‘The Death’) by Jean Genet; and *Viaggio di G. Mastorna* (The Journey of G. Mastorna), a phantom film by Federico Fellini. Using drafts and correspondences, the author explores these and various other “dream projects” to exhibit why they remained incomplete, how the unfinished arts reflect personal and professional aspirations, frustrations, and fantasies of their creators, and how these projects live on through subsequent works forever.

A devout Catholic, Claudel worked for about forty years on a tetralogy of plays that would depict the story of the evolution of the relation between Judaism and Christianity. It was his dream project, and a rather ambitious one, that would combine poetry, music, dance, and visual arts. He never finished it but Moraly finds its traces in several of Claudel’s subsequent works. He analyzes Claudel’s works, such as his epic tetralogy *The Satin Slipper* and his collaboration with Arthur Honegger on *Jeanne d’Arc au bûcher* along with several of his notes and letters to induce that Claudel’s dream project is marked by a paradoxical combination of grandeur and fragility. The author painstakingly exhibits how this contradiction present throughout the playwright’s art is a reflection of the tension between his religious beliefs and artistic ambitions.

For Jean Genet, Moraly focuses on his never completed text *La Mort* and calls this section in the book ‘A Triply Murderous Work’. He connects this dream project to Genet’s identity as a homosexual. Genet aspired to create a work that would reflect the phenomenon of ‘being’ a homosexual. As professed to Sartre, for him the very identity of a homosexual was akin to ‘a death instinct’. Although his dream project was never realized, this instinct, according to Moraly, manifests in the works of Genet at three levels – the death of the subject, the suicide of the author, and the destruction

of the work itself, making it “a triply murderous work”. Moraly also compares Genet’s dream project to his other works, such as *Le Balcon*, and *Les Paravents*, as well as to the works of other authors who influenced him, such as Rimbaud, Proust, and Sartre. Genet’s works thus analysed, reflects the presence of themes of death, love, betrayal, and identity.

Federico Fellini envisioned a cinematic counterpoint to Dante’s *Divine Comedy* as his dream project. Begun around 1965, *Il viaggio di G. Mastorna* was supposed to depict life after death that, unlike Dante’s orderly afterlife, is a world plagued by chaos and absurdity, a perplexing and troubling realm of the dead. Fellini’s later films, such as *Amarcord* and *City of Women*, turn out to be the last vestiges of the filmmaker’s original vision. Moraly also explains the difficulties Fellini faced in making his film, such as finding a suitable actor for the main role, dealing with censorship and criticism, and coping with his health problems and personal crisis.

The book brings three diverse artists together. The aim is not comparison yet their philosophy of art, their dreams and struggles meet and scatter throughout the book. For instance, the chapters unfold how all three of them were interested in exploring the boundaries between reality and fiction, sacred and profane, self and the other. It also highlights the differences between them in terms of their style, their genre, and their attitude toward their dream projects. While Claudel sought to express his faith through his works, Genet was a rebellious outsider who challenged the norms of society. While Fellini experimented with different genres and forms in his films, Claudel remained faithful to his classical influences and traditions in his plays. While Fellini embraced his dream project as a source of inspiration and creativity, Claudel suffered from his dream project bringing frustration and disappointment to the writer.

This leads to a weighty thematic consideration in the book – the paradoxical relation between death and art. A harbouring dream of an ‘absolute’ art can steer towards ‘death’ in multiple ways; such dreams may lead to the death of inspiration for the artist, as it was with Claudel, or it can lead to the dawn of a fresh artistic fervour, where Fellini’s filmography would be a case in point. Sometimes, the artistic vision on the verge of its realization is prevented by the physical death of the artist. In the concluding parts, the book delves into other incomplete works from several genres like theatre, film, and painting. One among these is Luchino Visconti’s adaptation of *In Search of Lost Time*. It’s interesting to note that Visconti refused to direct the film because in its fulfillment he saw the impending death of his creativity, reiterating that complex nature of the relation existing between death and art.

Apart from Claudel, Genet, and Fellini, the book also initiates similar evaluations of Mallarmé’s dream project *Le Livre* (‘The Book’), Schoenberg’s opera *Moses und Aron*, Bernard Dort’s never-completed autothéâtregraphy (his autobiography as a theatre spectator), Alfred de Vigny’s *La seconde consultation du Docteur Noir* (‘The second consultation of Dr. Noir’), Claude Monet’s ambitious painting *Nymphéas* (‘Waterlilies’), the theological manuscripts written by Isaac Newton and such other phantom projects that eventually supplied other accomplished ones with the sentiment of the original idealistic creation.

Through meticulous work of analytical reconstruction, the book divulges several unseen aspects of the artistic output of Paul Claudel, Jean Genet, and Federico Fellini. The book is highly recommended for anyone looking for a handbook on using the tool of content analysis in qualitative research.

DIKSHA BHARTI  
Ranchi University, Jharkhand